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REVIEW

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"To assess the performance of journalism . . . to help stimulate continuing improvement in the profession, and to speak out for what is right, fair, and decent" —From the founding editorial, 1961

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

A special report on Washington has been on our list for some time. But after September 11, it didn't seem appropriate to do a lot of Beltway bashing. Now, a year later, a somewhat different Washington press corps has emerged — more serious and more involved with the impact of terrorism, still the story of the day. But as the year progressed, some of the change proved ephemeral. Perhaps Washington is, as Charles Peters suggests, simply "eternal."

Tom Goldstein is joining the magazine as West Coast editor. Goldstein, who has just stepped down as dean of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, will be CJR's eyes and ears on journalistic developments in that part of the world. —David Laventhol



HEARST: WHERE JOURNALISM OF DISTINCTION IS AN EVERYDAY STORY

Anna Badkhen captures Russia, Asia and the Middle East for San Francisco.



Staff reporter Anna Badkhen brings San Francisco Chronicle readers a local perspective on Russia as well as award-winning stories that go beyond news headlines about life in Afghanistan, Asia and the Middle East. She's a Russian journalist, based in Moscow, with a beat that includes some of the most dangerous assignments in the world.

Anna travels extensively to cover the human side of international conflicts. She explores all sides of the story so readers can see a balanced picture of events and their consequences. In the Middle East, she reported on suicide-bomber families in Gaza and the victims of suicide bombings. In Afghanistan, she covered the struggles of daily life for victims of war and drought, the motivation of opium growers in the area, the mind-set of the anti-Taliban rebels and the dangers of reporting a war.

The San Francisco Chronicle has made a commitment to bringing readers international stories they won't find on the wire services. Having a staff reporter on the front lines to keep people informed at home is one more way Hearst Newspapers enrich readers' lives every day.


Hearst Newspapers

(Left) Anna Badkhen interviewing in Bamyan (Top) On the front line in Zartkamar, Takhor province (Bottom right) Satellite link to San Francisco

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LETTERS

LEFT IN THE DARK

"Exposure to Light," your special report on contemporary photojournalism in the July/August issue, is a wonderful reminder of — and tribute to — the determination and insight of those who strive to produce serious photojournalism every day.

However, aside from the one article about the small group of still photographers exploring video in pursuit of solo multimedia storytelling, CJR failed to acknowledge the contributions of — and challenges to — hundreds of mainstream television news photographers — broadcast and cable, local, network, and free-lance — whose work affects at least as many people each day as newspapers and newsmagazines.

While many network and free-lance TV photographers do their jobs as part of a five-person team (working with a reporter, a field producer, sound technician, and editor), many at the local level cover the news with only a reporter, and a significant number work as one-person reporter/photographers.

It is at the local level that TV photographers have perhaps the best opportunity to communicate the "vision" in television, yet they usually work in virtual anonymity. In striving to collect images, sounds, and words that tell a story and provide viewers with a sense of being at a news event, many TV photographers achieve within their

medium a visual journalism that equals that of their still counterparts.

It is my guess that most CJR readers are not fully aware of the nature and workings of TV news photography, particularly at the local level. Call them "shooters," "hounds," "cameramen/women" or "photographers," many demonstrate a commitment to excellence, a

dedication to informing the public, and a sense of personal responsibility and integrity in the face of daunting changes in the broadcast industry.

BILL GOETZ
News
photographer
KVAL-TV
Eugene, Oregon



BOARD GAMES

Regarding "What's So Crazy About a Board That Knows Journalism?" by Geneva Overholser, CJR, July/August:

I have to say that the old-timey, separatist management approach of daily boards has made life easier for their competitors. Why is it so difficult for them to realize they have two sets of customers — readers and advertisers?

How well one does with the readers will determine how well one does with advertisers. You can lead with quality

journalism that is relevant to the lives of people in a community and attract readers. Smart advertisers will recognize the strength of that relationship between newspaper and reader, and they will buy ads and get results. I can hear the chorus of business folks saying that advertisers aren't that smart. But they are. If the writers and editors are encouraged to do their part and the ad sales staff presents the results, advertisers will be educated and they will respond.

When publishers bend more and more to create newspapers that advertisers want without regard to the primacy of readers, then newspapers are dumbed down and less attractive to readers. Advertisers are not editors and make poor advisers for content. Newspaper boards that don't understand the relationship between news content and readers will slowly but surely undermine their own products. Without understanding they will make value-neutral financial decisions. Eventually they will make newspapers that are great to run ads in, but that no one respects or feels compelled to read.

From those of us in the alternative media, thanks.

TERRY GARRETT
Advertising director
Pacific Sun
Mill Valley, California

The proposal in Geneva Overholser's column that

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newspaper boards of directors get involved with editorial matters isn't just crazy. It's anachronistic. The idea has some appeal, especially attached to so many distinguished editors who have no reason to be fond of corporate boards. It might even have worked thirty years ago. With the possible exception of *The Wall Street Journal*, the corporate owners of today's major newspapers are now (cringe) media companies. Their boards are preoccupied with synergy and convergence, despite the AOL Time Warner fiasco. And they are just as responsible as the managers for succumbing to Wall Street's demands for profits in the mid-twenty percents. These are not people we want meddling in the newsroom, least of all influencing what is to be considered quality journalism.

JAMES S. KEAT
Retired editor, *The Sun*
Baltimore, Maryland

DOWN IN THE VALLEY

In "The New L.A. Times," by Diane K. Shah (CJR, May/June), John Carroll is quoted as saying, in discussing the regional editions of the *Times*: "The editors heeded the voices of people in the community who insisted there be nothing in that section but news pertaining to their community..."

As the editor of the Valley Edition of the *Times* from February 2000 to the spring of 2001, I listened to our readers — as any good editor will — but the edition daily reflected the most significant stories throughout the wide Los Angeles Times circulation area, not solely those from the Valley. Newsroom supervisors obviously paid keen attention to Carroll's directives. But neither he nor any other senior person in editorial ordered or even suggested that I change the Valley Edition. Nor were any complaints or criticisms

delivered. Carroll's advice, oft repeated, was for supervisors to work closely with their staffs and do the best stories possible, certainly laudable goals. The excellent staff in the Valley did what Carroll asked.

In January 2001, the Valley Edition was subordinated to the new Metro editor and downsized into a bureau, with most of its staff transferred from the Chatsworth office, its home, to downtown. As my job was in the process of being eliminated, I voluntarily stepped down as Valley Edition editor and resigned altogether from the *Times* that summer.

Shah states that the regional editions, before the change in ownership, "reflected each region's sensibility and the regional editor's whims." With more than twenty-five years in daily journalism, as a reporter, city editor, associate editor, managing editor, and editor, I did not act on "whims." I used my discretion, judgment, experience, and knowledge, and

generally discussed matters with key colleagues before making important decisions. Furthermore, I did not have the authority to act independently of downtown.

Had Shah spoken to newsroom supervisors who left after the new regime came to power, she would have been able to paint a more complete picture of the changes at the *Times* that followed the acquisition of Times Mirror by Tribune Company.

My greatest sin was probably bad timing: I left my job as managing editor of *The Toledo Blade* and arrived at the *Times* two weeks before its sale. Looking back, I still find it odd that so many of the tremendously competent and veteran newsroom leaders who helped make the *Times* a great newspaper have been replaced. The story of those who left or were removed from their positions, and why, would be a compelling tale to tell.

LEWIS A. LEADER
Carmel Valley, California

ARTS AND CULTURAL JOURNALISM FELLOWSHIPS at Columbia University

Supported by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, the National Arts Journalism Program offers fellowships to mid-career and senior journalists specializing in arts and culture. The program is based at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism in association with the School of the Arts.

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NAJP is hosting a conference on issues of free expression and the arts Nov. 20-21, 2002. Visit www.najp.org for more information.

CURRENTS

IN REVIEW: SLIDING ON THE BUBBLE

A few years ago I was sitting with a friend in a seedy German restaurant off Tenth Avenue in New York drinking giant steins of beer and talking about his job in investor relations for a Fortune 500 company. The company's stock was flying high, but my friend was in the dumps. He had just spent a long day briefing analysts on corporate earnings that he himself thought were fishy. "You don't understand," he said, "You have to make your number." And his company did — every single quarter, mostly by booking revenue from "sales" that many in management knew to be dubious. But what perplexed him most was that nobody — not even top analysts or major institutional shareholders — ever questioned the filings. I asked about the journalists who covered the company. "It's a joke," he said. "They never call."

In the wake of the revelations of widespread accounting fraud at leading corporations, it's been easy for journalists to strafe such targets as Kenneth Lay, Bernie Ebbers, and Dennis Kozlowski. But we shouldn't move on from this sad period without pausing to consider our own failings. Allow me to go first.

During much of the boom of the late 1990s I wrote about corporate mergers and acquisitions and was familiar with the various tricks lawyers and bankers used to pretty up the numbers associated with the multibillion-dollar deals. The most common of these was something called "pooling of interests" accounting, a device based on the pleasant fiction that one company wasn't really

buying the other, they were merely "pooling" their assets and liabilities. At that time companies were paying billions over market price to acquire their targets. Without pooling, those huge premiums they paid would be charged against earnings that year. Ouch. With pooling they were allowed to spread the costs out over decades so that — presto, chango — earnings looked fine. It was all nonsense, of course; one company was invariably being acquired. After a long struggle, the tactic was finally disallowed last year.

I knew pooling was a driving force behind the wave of consolidations I was covering but I never attacked it expressly. Why? In part, because my read-

ership — the lawyers and bankers managing these buyouts — knew all about it and I was co-opted by their "it's no big deal" attitude. Besides, the market wasn't punishing anyone for such gimmicks, and it had to know more than I did. Right?

It seems strange now to consider how easily a phrase as loaded as "managed earnings" slipped into the lexicon of business coverage, and how we brushed aside early accounting disasters (Waste Management, Cendant Corp.) as aberrations. One cringes at the memory of self-congratulatory CEOs yukking it up on cable television with pliant journo-boosters, and the countless glossy business profiles where the tone was often more

worthy of breathless teen magazines than financial journals.

The fact is that the sober business press got drunk on a potent mixture of ad revenue and newsstand sales. But now nobody remembers last night's party. We moved from the numerology of success (seven best mutual funds) to the numerology of failure (seven sins of corporate America) without much pause for introspection in between.

Many commentators have noted the similarities between the current wave of corporate scandal and that of a century ago, wondering aloud if President Bush is headed for a "Teddy Roosevelt" moment. Not frequently mentioned is the role the press played in spurring on the trustbuster, especially muckrakers like Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, and Edwin Markham. Perhaps the most vigorous corporate critic of all was also the earliest one, Henry Demarest Lloyd. He's largely forgotten now, but during his thirty-year career, culminating in his seminal work, *Wealth Against Commonwealth*, Lloyd was the first to plow through reams of financial data, court records, and hearing transcripts to expose corporate skulduggery in the Gilded Age. Explaining why he pursued corporate power with such vigor, Lloyd wrote, "Liberty produces wealth and wealth destroys liberty."

I'm not suggesting that we all need to run out and become crusading muckrakers. But our generation of journalists should bring more of the passion and skepticism that Lloyd and his colleagues brought to their coverage of corporate America. I know I wish I had.

— Douglas McCollam
McCollam covers legal affairs for *The American Lawyer*.

TECHNOLOGY CORNER

BETTER GOOGLING

When it comes to search engines, many journalists swear by Google.com and use it to start their Web hunts. But there's more to Google than the simple search function. Here are some additional Googling tools (you can find links to all these from the front page of Google):

- **LANGUAGES:** Google can search pages written in dozens of languages. Also, it can translate text or Web pages from French, Spanish, German, Italian, or Portuguese to English. Very useful when looking at foreign news sources.

- **TOOLBAR:** If you are using a Windows PC, you should download the free "Toolbar," which installs a search box on your Web browser, speeding up the search process. No Macintosh version yet.

- **NEWS:** This feature allows you to search several constantly updated news Web sites at once. Saves you time when trying to track stories.

- **IMAGES:** Use this feature — click "images" on the front page — to find photographs on the Web. Of course, just because you find a photo doesn't mean you can reprint it.

— Sreenath Sreenivasan

Sreenivasan, who teaches new media at Columbia, offers tips for journalists at www.sree.net.

MIDDLE EAST: LIFTING A VEIL ON THE ARAB PRESS

When Sheik Muhammad Al-Gamei'a, the director of a prominent mosque in New York City, addressed a multifaith assembly shortly after September 11, he spoke in English about peace and tolerance. But when he moved back to Cairo in late September, the sheik changed his tune. In an interview with an Arabic Web site, Al-Gamei'a claimed that Jewish doctors in America poison Muslim children and that "Zionists" perpetrated the September 11 attack.

The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization that translates Arabic- and Farsi-language media, posted the interview on its Web site, www.memri.org. *The New York Times* hired two independent translators to verify the MEMRI account and then ran a story about the two-faced sheik.

As the Middle East has moved to center stage, U.S. journalists have turned to the institute for translations of Arab news sources. Some reporters see it as a veil-lifting tool. "These people tell you what's going on in pulpits and in the state-controlled TV," says Brit Hume of Fox News. "If you have indoctrination, it's important to know about it." Others use MEMRI to highlight more tempered sentiments in the Arab world. When Tom Friedman of *The New York Times* wrote about Arab moderates on June 2, he quoted a MEMRI translation of an Arab diplomat's call for reform that had been published in the Saudi daily *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*. "What would happen if every Arab country had, since 1948, turned its attention to building itself up from within," asked the diplomat, "without making Palestine its main issue?"

Yigal Carmon — a retired

Israeli military-intelligence colonel — started MEMRI in February 1998. The idea, he says, is "to have people in the West read an Arab editorial the way they read it in *The New York Times*, with their morning coffee. There is nothing like primary sources to give the true picture of any country." The service is free through MEMRI's Web site, which draws about 82,000 unique visitors a month, according to Steven Stalinsky, the institute's executive director; the institute has about 20,000 "subscribers" — also free — who get the translations faxed or e-mailed to them. MEMRI has branch offices in Berlin, London, Jerusalem, and Moscow. Some twenty staff members monitor Arab media, translating editorials, TV broadcasts, school textbooks, and sermons into English, German, Hebrew, French, Spanish, Italian, Turkish, and Russian.

The privately funded institute raised \$106,000 in 1998 from foundations and individual donors and more than \$500,000 in 2000, according to its Form 990. The names of individual donors are not listed on the form, and Carmon says he "didn't get permission from all the donors to give their names."

Not everyone applauds MEMRI's contribution. James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute, agrees with Carmon that there is hate speech and incitement in the Arab press. Zogby claims, however, that MEMRI distorts the Middle East debate because, he says, there is just as much intolerance voiced in the Israeli media. "It's a two-sided monster," Zogby says. "Is there incitement in the Israeli press? Yes, there is. Are there disgraceful articles that treat Arabs in racist ways that should raise concern in the West? Yes, there are. Are those articles known? No, they aren't. MEMRI made it a one-sided issue."

— Joshua Lipton

LANGUAGE CORNER

THOSE WILD AND CRAZY HYPHENS

Stacy Moore, managing editor of the *Hi-Desert Star* in Yucca Valley, California, e-mailed to ask about hyphenation, a topic that could fill a book (now there's a chilling thought). She and a writer at the paper differed over whether to hyphenate "big city," "beach front," and "ice cold" as compound adjectives in front of nouns. Moore concluded, "I say hyphenate 'em all."

Agreed.

The classic reason for using hyphens with compounds is to

avoid ambiguity. The hyphen links two or more words instantly for the reader's rapidly moving eye. "Big-city" is a perfect example. A "big city man" is a large man from a city. A "big-city man" is a man from a large city, and the hyphen is mandatory to pull the two words together to make one modifier. "Forty-odd employees" would be silly without the hyphen. So would "small-business man" (which requires splitting "businessman" in two).

Beyond that, "big-city" just

wants a hyphen because convention calls for it. And, even though they're not likely to be misunderstood when they're hyphen-free, that's also true of adjectives like "beach-front" (also reasonable as one word, noun and adjective) and "ice-cold."

Or so it says here. Some decisions about hyphens, especially decisions about what convention requires, are open to argument. And the same compounds will appear hyphenated in one good publica-

tion and naked in another. Style, not right or wrong, determines which ones go which way.

Some editors, including this one after many a year, like hyphens better than others do. But we of the pro-hyphen school would do well to remember a Churchillian pearl: "One must regard the hyphen as a blemish to be avoided whenever possible."

— Evan Jenkins

More on the little beast, and many other writing topics, is in *Language Corner* at CJR's Web site, www.cjr.org.

PUBLIC RADIO: FIREWALLS AND FUNDING

The session on "Business and Journalism Values" at the annual Public Radio Conference in Washington last spring promised to be serious. Ponderous, even. Then Jeffrey Dvorkin, the NPR ombudsman, sashayed into the room in a judge's robe and white wig, waving a gavel.

"Why not have some fun?" asked Dvorkin, one of three judges for an in-house version of the NPR game show *Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me!* The idea was to use the game-show format as a way to navigate the tangle of ethical dilemmas that have cropped up in recent years.

So three teams — program and news directors, general managers, and development directors — grappled with questions based on actual situations. What should a station do if a philanthropist offers a large grant to produce a news series on his favorite issue? Can reporters be assigned to "publicize" a bill that would be of great benefit to a station? What if reporters and editors

at a station think they are offering fair coverage of a war, but a major donor threatens to boycott if the station doesn't "balance" its coverage and tilt in the funder's direction?

As government funding for public radio has dwindled in the last decade, stations have been forced to replace it with private money. This, in turn, has led to new partnerships, sometimes with businesses and foundations that have an interest in what gets broadcast. At the same time, NPR and much of public radio has moved from being an alternative news source to a mainstream one, ratcheting up the stakes for advertisers and sponsors ("underwriters" and "funders") who now expect more bang for their bucks — more listeners for their messages.

"In some corners, the firewall feels a little more porous," explains Peter Iglinski, president of Public Radio News Directors Inc. What is needed, he says, is an understanding by all parties — management and development as well as the news

— so that everyone is clear about where the line is before a crisis develops. "With the game-show format," he says, "no one was put on the defensive."

Contestants were given three potentially contradictory "guiding principles" to consider as they made their decisions: maximize benefit to listeners, maximize journalistic integrity, and maximize station revenue.

It wasn't always the journalists who came up with the most journalistically sound answers. John Watson, a journalism ethics professor at American University and one of the game-show judges, ruled in favor of the development folks, who said they would run an unsavory-sounding bit of tape in a story involving phone sex "if it advances the story." The news directors were ready to pull the sound if listeners objected.

Development directors and the GMs both waffled, however, when faced with whether to accept money from an arts council in exchange for a five-minute weekly program. The news directors said the idea was "tainted from the start,"

and when Bill Buzenberg, head of news at Minnesota Public Radio and one of the judges, declared, "Nobody buys programming on public radio," the audience broke into applause.

National Public Radio's worries are different from those confronting local member stations. NPR's firewall is solid; a funder can't underwrite a series, for instance, because money goes into NPR's general fund and is not tied to any one story. Programming and content decisions are made independently of the development office, and NPR has rules against accepting funds for covering specific issues.

But there is some concern that success might spoil NPR. As the stakes rise, says NPR's Dvorkin, programming tends to become risk averse. "No one comes down to the news department and says, 'Do more stories that are more accessible to a larger audience,' but I think that we've become addicted to money. And that becomes a kind of self-censorship; we know at a sub-conscious level what's acceptable and what's not acceptable."

— Judith Hepburn Blank

TV NEWS: DOWN THE TUBE

In the last eighteen months, eight TV stations around the country have scrapped their locally produced newscasts, claiming they are too expensive to produce. Station executives say the slumping economy, a drop in network compensation, and the 1997 FCC mandate that stations upgrade to digital are to blame.

The local newscast has traditionally been a station's biggest money-maker. According to the Radio-Television News Directors

Association, on average 44 percent of a station's revenue comes from its newscast. These eight stations were not losing money, then, just not making enough. "Stations can no longer support news departments that don't bring in the revenue needed to operate," says Chad Liby, creative services director at Topeka's KTKA.

Most of the stations have replaced their newscasts with inexpensive re-runs and syndicated shows.

SIGNING OFF

Station	Market	Rank	Affiliation	Owner
KDNL	St. Louis, Mo.	22	ABC	Sinclair Broadcast Group
WXLV	Winston-Salem, N.C.	44	ABC	Sinclair Broadcast Group
WPXT	Portland, Me.	80	WB	Pegasus Communications
WKPT*	Kingsport, Tenn.	93	ABC	Holston Valley Broadcasting
WAPK*	Kingsport, Tenn.	93	UPN	Holston Valley Broadcasting
WEVV	Evansville, Ind.	97	CBS	Communications Corp. of Indiana
KTKA	Topeka, Kans.	138	ABC	Brechner Management
WBKP	Marquette, Mich.	177	ABC	Scanlan Television

*Both stations relied on a joint news department.

LAW: WHO'S A REPORTER?

Valiant local investigative journalist or cranky fanatical stalker? Free-lance reporter Paul Trummel has been characterized both ways in the struggle over a Web site he runs. And now he's become a symbolic question mark in a debate over just who is a journalist.

On his site (<http://contracaball.org>), Trummel regularly criticizes administrators of the Seattle senior citizens' apartment building where he used to live. Trummel's online complaints about security lapses at Council House, which receives HUD funding, ranged from suggesting that staff members' negligence

contributed to the death of a resident who fell from a window, to the allegation that one former guard had terrorist sympathies.

Trummel sees himself as a journalist investigating residents' complaints of administrative incompetence. But Jim Doerty, chief civil judge, King County Superior Court, found that Trummel had harassed Council House residents and administrators. And Trummel served nearly four months, including twenty-five days in solitary confinement, for defying Doerty's court order to remove from his site the names and addresses of Council House administrators (names that

Trummel says he gathered from public records).

On June 19, Doerty released Trummel on the condition that he alter his site or return to jail, and Trummel complied. "I felt I had met my commitment to the profession at that point," Trummel says. "I saw this as creating a precedent for other journalists if I didn't stand my ground."

Judge Doerty argues that journalists have no reason to fear his ruling. He says he tried to balance the right of Council House residents and administrators to be left alone with Trummel's right to publish. "There were only specific narrow bits of information that I ordered to have him take off" the site, Doerty says.

Trummel's attorney sees it



another way: the order reflects a disturbing tendency by judges to suppress free speech online and to attempt to determine who is, or is not, a real journalist. Elena Garella, an attorney who specializes in constitutional law, argues: "If journalists don't watch out for these kinds of actions in the court system, they're going to jump up and bite them later on."

—Sharlee DiMenichi

THE WEB: UNLOCK THOSE LINKS

Hyperlinks are the heart of the World Wide Web, digital threads that allow users to move at will among the endless network of online documents. News organizations that attempt to control these links find themselves accused by a vocal group of Web-watchers of trying to rip the Web's heart out.

National Public Radio is the latest to get flak for banning unapproved links to its Web site. Belo, which owns *The Dallas Morning News*, and Rodale Press, publishers of *Runner's World* and other magazines, have also been targeted by protesters for trying to control so-called "deep links." These are hyperlinks that bypass a Web site's homepage to reach content deeper in the site.

After blogger Cory Doctorow posted a link on his site, BoingBoing, to NPR's

linking policy — which required prospective linkers to get permission — NPR was deluged with outraged letters. An online uproar ensued on sites like Wired and Slashdot.

NPR got the message. A new policy, posted recently, declares, "NPR encourages and permits links to content on NPR Web sites." But with a few caveats. It still requires, for instance, that there be no implication that the linked-to story endorses "any third party's causes, ideas, Web sites, products or services," and that NPR's content won't be used for "inappropriate commercial purposes."

NPR's policy addressed all links, but it is deep-linking, lawyers for these publishers argue, that poses a genuine financial threat. Homepages are generally considered prime advertising and marketing space, and hits to a

homepage can generate more revenue than hits to pages accessed through deep links. When lawyers for the *News* sent a cease-and-desist letter to the publisher of a Dallas-based Web site, BarkingDogs, that was deep-linking to the paper's site, one of their arguments was that such links cut into company profits. Belo lawyers also argued that the unapproved links represented copyright infringement.

Public Citizen, a nonprofit public advocacy group, responded to Belo's lawyers on behalf of BarkingDogs, arguing that in the only two U.S. court cases in which a copyright issue had been raised, the judge supported the right to deep-link. "Your contention threatens the viability of the World Wide Web itself," said Paul Alan Levy, an attorney for Public Citizen, in a letter to Belo's lawyers.

U.S. District Court Judge Harry Hupp, in the March 2000 case involving Ticket-

master to which Levy referred, said, "Hyperlinking does not itself involve a violation of the Copyright Act." He compared such links to the use of "a library's card index to get reference to particular items, albeit faster and more efficiently."

Meanwhile, though, a July ruling by a Danish court stopped Newsbooster, a Denmark-based site that links to news articles, from linking to articles published by the Danish Newspaper Publishers' Association. The judge in that case ruled that such links violated the DNPA's copyrights. That ruling is being appealed.

As linking law evolves, then, one thing is clear: U.S. news organizations that try to control the Web's navigational heart face not only a legal precedent that rejects such attempts, but also a vigilant group of self-appointed watchdogs.

—John Giuffo

ROLE MODEL

ON HIS OWN: ROBERT FRIEDMAN

*Powerful Mideast Reporting From
A Man Who Liked "Hanging Around"*



REUBEN WASHINGTON/NEW YORK TIMES

Robert Friedman with his wife, Christine Dugas

BY MURRAY POLNER

In the spring of 1979, while I was editor of *Present Tense*, a liberal Jewish magazine published until 1990 by the American Jewish Committee, an unmarked envelope arrived at the front desk. "Some guy put it on the front desk and quickly left," the clerk warned me. At the time there had been amorphous threats against Jewish targets in the city.

It was, however, only an unsolicited manuscript, written by a Robert Friedman,

typed on lined, spiral notebook paper. It told the story of the Gush Emunim, or Bloc of the Faithful, the prototypical Israeli movement of today's ultrareligious and nationalistic Israeli settlements. Created by Orthodox zealots, well funded, as Friedman later discovered, by wealthy Diaspora Jews, the Gush Emunim insisted that the West Bank was Jewish land and that its ownership signaled the beginning of the Messianic Age.

The story of Gush Emunim was possibly the first major piece he had ever gotten pub-

lished. In it, he had the foresight to predict that the number of settlements would continue to multiply and would become the focal point of bloody clashes between Israelis and Palestinians for decades to come. This in 1979!

I met him soon after *Present Tense* published his article, and learned that Robbie, as his wife, Christine Dugas, herself a journalist, and friends called him, had a bachelor's degree in African and Middle Eastern studies from the University of Colorado, and studied for one semester at the American University of Beirut. In Israel, he worked on a kibbutz and in construction, and he was irresistibly drawn to the still small number of Jewish settlements and the Gush Emunim's ideological and religious leader, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, who told him, "I told the prime minister that Judah and Samaria is our land, absolutely, belonging to all the Jewish people."

Somehow, my editorial instinct persuaded me that his style of reporting (I made him a contributing editor) would lead him to become a singular writer who never hesitated to take on powerful people or organizations. This earned him lots of enemies, libel suits aimed at silencing him but which he never lost, a beating on the West Bank, death threats from a Russian mob-

ster, and charges by hard-line right-wing Jews that he was, variously, either not Jewish or a Jewish anti-Semite.

Robbie showed me what a dedicated, meticulous reporter could accomplish. What attracted my attention was his painstaking use of sources and classified information and the personal risks he was willing to assume — from interviewing West Bank settlers to writing about secret CIA funding, to investigating the Russian mob scene in New York City and elsewhere. The more stories he broke, stories that reporters and editors at mainstream media tended to overlook or shy away from, the more he was fed secret stuff from intelligence operatives in the United States and Israel. I asked him once how he managed to develop all his leads, including obtaining all those classified reports. I remember him smiling, sipping water slowly, and with a clear hint of pride, answering, "I like hanging around with people." Most of his writing was done as a freelancer, with the exception of five years at the *Village Voice*, from late 1989 to early 1995, followed by fifteen months at *New York* magazine.

For a few years his articles for *Present Tense* appeared fairly regularly. There were reports on Aleppo, Damascus, and Beirut, where he hinted at the danger facing outsiders, especially Jews. He wrote of the "dirty, mean streets" of Beirut, of the people pouring in to join the militias and terrorist groups. When he wanted to visit Syria in the late 1970s he asked the American consul in Amman, Jordan, for help. The consul, recognizing

Friedman as a Jewish name, sighed: "You're making an awful lot of extra work for me."

"Why?" asked Robbie.

"Cause I'm gonna hate to call your mamma and tell her you're dead."

In 1980 he and Christine traveled to Beirut. Their trip began in the headquarters of El Fatah, the Palestine Liberation Organization's armed terror group, and they met Abu Iyad, the man who organized Black September, the notorious terrorists who killed eleven Israeli athletes at the Munich Summer Olympics in 1972. After serving the couple tea and cookies, this "arch-terrorist," who lived like a Mafia don, as Robbie described him, began his familiar litany of Israeli crimes and Palestinian demands. Robbie's account read: "Nodding mechanically, I had a dark fantasy of a future Palestinian Arab government plowing over Israel's Yad Vashem, the memorial to the Holocaust dead, to erect their own hall of suffering."

His second *Present Tense* article, a portrait of Rabbi Meir Kahane, caused many fervid defenders of Israel to excoriate him. Yet, he and Kahane had a strange, almost odd-couple friendship — the charismatic rabbi talking freely to the young, innocent-looking reporter about his life, beliefs, and motives, perhaps even interested in influencing him. "He was always nice to me, and he always talked to me," Robbie told David Schifrin of *The Jewish Week*. In Jerusalem, in the 1980s, he encountered Kahane. "He came up to me," Robbie recalled, "and said, 'There's hope for you. You are a good Jew. Do you want to have dinner?'" Robbie liked Kahane but was repelled by his views. His biography of the rabbi, *The False Prophet*

— which many publishers had rejected — was a highly critical account of the rise and fall of the radical religious racist. Though the book was praised in many publications, it received an unfavorable review in *The New York Times Book Review* by a writer for a Jewish weekly newspaper who called it an "unrelenting hatchet job" and accused Friedman of wishing "to indict America's Jewish institutions and Zionism."

He continued writing for various publications about AIPAC, the American-Israel Political Action Committee, the powerful Israel lobby whose operations remain largely neglected in the mainstream media. He wrote critical articles for the *Village Voice* on the Anti-Defamation League, earning its eternal enmity, making him even more of an outsider. Even so, he won many journalistic awards, including one from the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee as well as the Smolar Award for Excellence in North American Jewish Journalism, named for Boris Smolar, a respected journalist for Yiddish newspapers.

By now, his career had taken off following his extraordinary investigation, written for *New York* magazine, of the terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center in 1993. A source handed him a crucial video, shot by one of the terrorists who also happened to be a government informant, that helped lead to the arrest and conviction of Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman and his accomplices. Almost seven years before September 11 he wrote in *New York* magazine that the tape "offers a rare, chilling glimpse into the casually, even flippantly ruthless mind-set of religious zealots who are prepared to slaughter countless innocents in the name of God."

Robbie was just as prophetic in his seminal work about Russian criminals who had migrated to the United States. Probably the first American reporter to successfully penetrate their incredibly violent world, his last book, *Red Mafiya*, describes how, while working on a piece about the Italian mafia, a Genovese mob source introduced him to his Russian counterparts. Robbie started "hanging around" with them, visiting them in federal prisons, their Florida strip clubs, their suburban homes, and Brighton Beach apartments and restaurants. Relying on interviews and secret intelligence documents, he named names and detailed their criminal activities and brutality. "He was a pioneer when there was nobody else out there," Robert Levinson, an ex-FBI agent who covered organized crime, told Sherry Ricciardi of the *American Journalism Review*. "I packed a sidearm for twenty-eight years. Robbie had only his notebook and pen."

Once I asked Robbie, already sick with a debilitating disease, if he and Christine wouldn't be better off living a quieter, more normal life. He had just received a death threat. He answered this way: "I once quit a job at a Las Vegas paper because I didn't want to spend my life chasing fires and politicians. I still don't."

He died at age fifty-one on July 2 of a rare blood disease — Idiopathic Hypereosinophilic Syndrome — which he contracted in Bombay seven years earlier while researching a story for *Vanity Fair* about female sexual slavery and political corruption. The piece ultimately ran in *The Nation*. Editors there say he was particularly proud of it. ■

Murray Polner is the author of No Victory Parades: The Return of the Vietnam Veteran.

Who

fought for a quality education for their children?

Who

went to jail in order to ride the public buses?

Who

changed the law to gain access to the vote?

Who

has created more change in America than any other group in the last 2 decades?

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DARTS & . . .

HOW TO HOOK THE PUBLIC

— In a string of articles published during the fall and winter and spring, *The Daily Oklahoman* reported on the progress of a controversial proposal to build a \$17.2 million, taxpayer-financed store whose space would be leased back over a twenty-year period to Bass Pro Shops (after which period Bass Pro would be free to move out if enough customers didn't bite). But while casting the proposal in sunny light, the paper's fifty-odd articles, features, cartoons, and editorials — including a front-page story and a supportive editorial urging the city council to approve it on the day before the vote (which on May 21 it did) — the paper, with only a single, parenthetical reference buried in a column last October, kept readers in the dark about one fishy fact: 19.9 percent of Bass Pro Shops belongs to Gaylord Entertainment, whose chairman emeritus, Edward Gaylord, is the chairman of the company that owns the *Oklahoman*. Misplaced family modesty seems also to have been at work on Sunday, May 19, in a featured article on the front page of the *Oklahoman*'s business section, plugging the recently opened Gaylord Palms Resort and Conference Center, four states away in Orlando. Although it had room for five color photos, the piece nowhere mentioned that the Gaylords who own the hotel are the Gaylords who own the paper. That piece, not incidentally, was written by Sue Hale, executive editor of the *Oklahoman*. And let's not overlook the fact — as the paper itself did in its appreciative review of *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood* — that the Gaylord of Gaylord Films, producer of the movie, is the Gaylord of the *Oklahoman*, publisher of the review.

— The *Oklahoman*'s nondisclosure policy was evident again in late July, when an editor's note tersely announced the replacement of Patrick McGuigan, longtime editor of its editorial page, "who resigned to pursue other business and professional opportunities, including writing a book on American politics and culture." It was left to other local media to tell the inside story of the political brouhaha set in motion when McGuigan sent to selected state representatives a letter — written on *Oklahoman* stationery, and signed by him as "editor, editorial page" — in which he tried to sway their support away from a challenger in the primary election for labor commissioner.

REPEAT PERFORMANCE

— In the *Omaha World Herald* on July 15, there mysteriously appeared an unattributed report on the appointment of Itzhak Perlman as music adviser of the St. Louis Symphony — a report that was in fact a note-for-note reprise of Sarah Bryan Miller's exclusive, bylined, copyrighted piece in the July 12 *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

WHILE EDITORS NODDED . . .

— . . . the Trenton, New Jersey, *Trentonian* put into print a report on a fire at a psychiatric hospital under the headline ROASTED NUTS. (Abject apologies followed, first in a column two days later by the hapless headline-writer, then, twelve days after that, following condemnation — and a hint of possible legal action — by the National Institute of Mental Health, in a publisher's editorial, in which he begged for forgiveness and promised active reform. Both apologies also noted, without apparent irony, that the insensitive headline had been "inaccurate" as well, inasmuch as no patients had been burned in the fire.)

— . . . *The Wall Street Journal* put into print an excoriating editorial on Governor George Pataki's plan to create six Indian casinos in New York State, drawing its rhetorical ammunition from a barrel of such stereotypes as "big chief," "trading beads," "great white father," and "pow-wow." (In a follow-up editorial four weeks later, the *Journal* dismissed, in passing, the "perceived insults" of Native Americans thusly: "We thought we were having fun with Mr. Pataki, not Indians. But in any case the race card has become the first refuge of scoundrels in American politics.")

— . . . *The Light and Champion* of Center, Texas, put into print an incoherent letter to the editor asserting that the U.S. economy, the Federal Reserve, the Republican and Democratic parties, and the American media are all controlled by Jews. (Candace Velvin, the paper's president, editor, and publisher, told CJR that she had hoped to generate "dialogue.")

CULTIVATING CREDIBILITY


— Of course it's good for a news organization to disclose an apparent conflict of interest, but better still to avoid that conflict in the first place. Consider, for example, a series written by Mikkell Pates for the *Grand Forks Herald* about a trade mission to Cuba sponsored jointly by the North Dakota Farm Bureau and the governor's office. Conscientiously included at the end of Pates's pieces — from CONTRACTS ARE IN THE WORKS (July 24) to CUBANS IMPRESSED (July 25) to CUBA INKS SALES DEAL (July 26) — was this inevitably doubt-planting note: "The *Herald* is sharing costs for Pates' trip with the North Dakota Farm Bureau."


Darts & Laurels is written by Gloria Cooper, CJR's deputy executive editor. Nominations may be addressed to her by mail, phone (212-854-1887), or e-mail (gc15@columbia.edu).


... LAURELS

THE CALL OF DUTY


Journalism heroes aren't born, they're made — sometimes, it seems, by ethically challenged bosses. A few recent cases in point:


 When the Northport, Alabama, *Gazette* hired a local councilman whose duties included covering his own town's council meetings, associate editor Carmen Sisson registered her protest and quit.

 When the Stephens Media Group instructed Tom McDonald, editor of the *Pine Bluff Commercial*, one of the group's numerous Arkansas newspapers, to get ready to endorse Jay Dickey, a "longtime friend" of the Stephens family, in his campaign to regain his former congressional seat — an instruction that came in apparent response to a memo from Dickey suggesting various ways that the *Commercial* might enhance his chances while undermining those of his opponent — McDonald quit.


 When the Brown Publishing Company, owner of a chain of Ohio newspapers, sent to some of its editors a stream of must-run press releases from the primary campaign office of the company's CEO, Roy Brown — followed by stacks of Brown-for-Congress fliers — one editor, at least, spoke out. Describing his company's actions as violating every standard in the book, Kevin O'Boyle, editor of the *Vandalia Drummer News*, told the *Dayton Daily News* (in an April 6 interview prompted by the filing of an FEC complaint by Brown's rival for the seat) that "by talking to you I'm signing my death warrant." "Absolutely not," was the quoted response of Joel Dempsey, Brown's general counsel. "He won't be fired

for this." Dempsey might more truthfully have added, "not right away." The firing came two months later, on June 19.

 When Tami Carroll, interim general manager of *The Oak Ridger* in Tennessee, handed back to editor Dale McConnaughay his editorial — a cautious endorsement of a controversial \$23 million bond issue to redevelop a city mall — and told him to replace it with the more enthusiastic editorial she had written herself (marked DO NOT CHANGE A WORD OF THIS), McConnaughay balked. Noting that Carroll, who also serves as the paper's advertising director, was an active member of a pro-development group (she wore "Vote Yes" lapel buttons and kept petitions in her office), McConnaughay tried to resolve the conflict by reworking his original editorial into his regular signed column, and by seeking ethical guidance from the parent company (which never came). Carroll, however, found a solution of her own: she fired him. The reason, she told him (and, later, the *Knoxville News-Sentinel*) was "insubordination."

 When D. Mark Singletary, publisher of Dolan Media's *CityBusiness* in New Orleans, decided that the paper henceforth would carry advertiser-sponsored news pages, editor Kathy Finn objected. (The "sponsored-by" phrase was dropped, replaced by advertiser logos and banner ads.) When Singletary suggested reassigning two reporters whose work had drawn advertisers' complaints, editor Finn objected. (The reporters stayed put.) When Singletary decided to lower the wall between editorial and advertising, Finn objected again — and was fired. As reported by the weekly *Gambit*, the staff "bade Finn an extremely fond farewell" in a *CityBusiness* op-ed piece. She "was a reporter's editor," the testimonial said. "She never asked her staff to write one word that would cheapen them, their readers, their paper, or their profession."

INSIDE STORY

 A dirty little secret of the newspaper business, too long relegated to trade magazines and academic publications, has finally been brought into bright mainstream light. In a page-one story by Patricia Callahan (July 19), *The Wall Street Journal* unblinkingly examined the industry's treatment of the paperboys and papergirls — at last count, some 140,000 — who deliver the news to the nation's doors. For all its practical value in experience and pay, Callahan shows, that legendary job presents extremely serious dangers — robbery, sexual assault, abduction, car accidents, even death. Making matters worse is the callous refusal of their employers to help financially in any way, be it med-

ical bills, insurance, or death benefits; instead, the newspapers claim that they are absolved of responsibility because the carriers, already exempted from federal child-labor laws, are commonly regarded as independent and self-employed — "little merchants," as it were. This bottom-line ethos finds further form in lobbying mercilessly — and successfully — whenever this or that state tries to join the handful of those — among them, New York, Wisconsin, Nevada, Kentucky, and Maryland — that do extend workmen's comp coverage to young paper-carriers. Tracing the history of the shameful story, Callahan does not spare the *Journal's* parent, Dow Jones. Of the kids who deliver the company's community papers, she reports, only about half are covered by workmen's compensation,

and then only because a state requires it; as to the number of kids who deliver the *Journal* itself, Dow Jones says it doesn't know. More revealing is the case in which Dow Jones, as owner of *News-Times* in Danbury, Connecticut, fought a claim of \$35,000 in unpaid medical bills incurred by a fourteen-year-old paperboy who underwent seven operations and was left legally blind after being hit by a snowball from a passing car. Letting the facts tell the tale, Callahan reports that the company prevailed on appeal, and quotes the *News-Times* circulation director as saying that the paper refused to pay in fear of setting a precedent: "It wasn't just for *News-Times*, it was to stand up for every newspaper," he said. Readers may take a different view of what newspapers should stand up for.

A Run with the Pack

What Our Fast-Moving Press Passes By

BY MICHAEL MASSING

Kabul, four in the morning. An earthquake jolts the house. Pulling on some clothes, I dash outside. My housemate, an NPR correspondent, is already in the courtyard, asking guards where the quake might be. If the destruction is great enough, he wants to see it. By dawn, we know: the epicenter is in Nahrin, a district capital some 100 miles to the north. The town has reportedly been leveled, with thousands of casualties. The road to Nahrin, as in so much of Afghanistan, is deeply rutted, and getting there requires going through the Salang Tunnel — or, as journalists like to call it, the Fucking Salang Tunnel. Built by Soviet engineers in the 1960s, the nearly two-mile-long passage cuts through the rugged Hindu Kush, connecting Kabul with cities to the north. Unfortunately, the tunnel is narrow, and accidents often block it for hours. Even if it is clear, the trip to Nahrin can take the better part of a day. My NPR colleague is nonetheless determined to go. Dropping everything else, he rustles up a sleeping bag, a case of bottled water, and a spare car battery to power his laptop.

Later that morning at the offices of the United Nations Mission, I find the dapper spokesman, Manoel de Almeida e Silva, besieged by journalists clamoring for a seat on one of the helicopters flying to the disaster site. In the end, most have to drive. In the afternoon, I run into one of the few who stayed behind, a correspondent from *USA Today*. She had begged her editor to let her go but had been refused. "That's why we subscribe to the AP," he had told her. When I asked why she had been so eager to go, she says, "Oh, plenty of dead bodies."

I must say, I agreed with her editor. This was late March, when a new Afghanistan was taking shape. With so much going on in Kabul — the Karzai

government's push to establish its authority, the international community's efforts to galvanize the economy, the United States's on-again, off-again commitment to nation-building — why not leave the quake to the wires?

I had come to Afghanistan for two-and-a-half weeks to write a political analysis for *The Nation*. Yes, I was a parachutist. It was a particularly tough place to be one — the strange languages, the forbidding terrain, the impenetrable culture, the lack of phones, the early curfew, landmines, bland food, no bars, and the women draped like furniture in storage. Most of all, there was the sense that so much of what happened in Afghanistan occurred beneath the surface, and that getting at it required large reserves of time, dedication, and resourcefulness.

The correspondents based in Kabul

seemed to have all three. They were learning Dari, going on military patrol, sipping tea with warlords. They all had Thurayas, the latest in satellite phones, and were constantly on the line to New York or Paris. Pulitzer Prize winners abounded. Attending a press conference at the presidential palace one afternoon, I ran into John Burns, the *New York Times* correspondent. A burly man with an impressive head of graying curls who was toting a copy of *The God That Failed*, Burns has been covering Afghanistan off and on since 1989. As we waited for the conference to begin, he gestured toward a room in an adjoining wing of the palace and said that was where Najibullah (Afghanistan's president from 1987 to 1992) had shown him the spot where former President Daoud Khan had been murdered. How could I compete with that?

COUNTRY IN TURMOIL: Earthquakes in March devastated drought-stricken Nahrin; in Kabul, Defense Minister Mohammed Fahim is Afghanistan's most important warlord.



EARTHQUAKE: AP/WIDEWORLD; AFGHANISTAN: ZIMANICHENKO; FAHIM: AP/WIDEWORLD/ANK SHAH

Yet being a parachutist had its advantages. I faced no deadlines. I had no editors to confer with. And, as one of the few free-lancers in Afghanistan by that time, I felt like an outsider among my peers. This allowed me to see the country — and the press corps — with a newcomer's eyes. And I came away feeling that my colleagues had succumbed to several unfortunate syndromes, which together caused them to miss what is perhaps the most important political story in post-Taliban Afghanistan.

First, there's the breaking-news syndrome. In covering Afghanistan, Western news organizations seem excessively wed to traditional-style news — explosions, skirmishes, assassination plots, natural disasters. The press migration to Nahrin was one example. Another was the roundup in early April of hundreds of Afghans for allegedly plotting to overthrow the government. When the editors of *The Washington Post* learned that *The New York Times* planned to run a story about the arrests on its front page, it called one of its correspondents in Kabul at midnight and got her to write a quick version so the paper would not be scooped. Couldn't the *Post's* readers have waited a day for a fuller account?

The breaking-news syndrome works in reverse, I found, when news breaks elsewhere. While I was in Kabul, the Passover bombing occurred in Israel, and the subsequent flare-up of violence in the Middle East caused editors back home to lose all interest in Afghanistan. The only stories reporters in Afghanistan could then get into the paper were soft features. The correspondent for *USA Today* spent days gathering material about how Kabul doesn't work. A reporter for *U.S. News & World Report* went to Bamiyan province — site of the Taliban's destruction of the two Buddhas — to investigate rumors that a third was buried in the sand. Not exactly the best use of journalistic resources.

These experiences, in turn, point to a second shortcoming in the press's approach to Afghanistan — its pack mentality. The "hacks" in Kabul, as they call themselves, tend to hang out with one another, eat together, party together. Most nights, they would gather at someone's house, ice up some Heinekens or Stolichnaya procured on the black market, put on some CDs, light up cigarettes, and trade stories. Many of these parties were organized by Marla, a bubbly, blond-haired woman who had come

to Kabul for Global Exchange, the antiglobalization group based in San Francisco. Marla's mission was to organize Afghans who had lost family members to the U.S. bombing. She was hoping both to document the number of victims and to get survivors to demand compensation from the United States.

I never did figure out if Marla's hostessing was specifically designed to snare the media's attention, but stories about civilian casualties began appearing regularly. And, on one level, they were welcome. Last fall, while the air campaign was taking place, many U.S. news organizations had studiously avoided the subject. The difficulty of reaching the bomb sites was one factor, but even more important, I think, were the inhibiting effects of the war's popularity and of Donald Rumsfeld's intimidating performances at press conferences. Now the press was finally getting around to investigating the matter.

Well-researched accounts, though, put the civilian death toll at about 1,000. While all such deaths are regrettable, that number seems low when measured against the positive effects of the bombing — the overthrow of the Taliban, the smashing of al Qaeda, the restoration of basic freedoms to the Afghan people. In fact, Marla told me that many of the families she had contacted were so pleased with the results of the bombing that they were reluctant to come forward to demand compensation. This reality, however, made its way into very few of the stories that appeared in the U.S. press. The coverage of the issue swung from complete silence to lockstep condemnation — a demonstration of how synchronized the reporting out of Kabul tends to be.

A final weakness of the press corps in Kabul is its taste for adventure. At first glance, this might sound odd. Reporting from Afghanistan requires abundant curiosity, spunk, and nerve. But excessive thrill-seeking can lead to questionable news judgment. Thus, journalists' interest in covering the earthquake in Nahrin seemed directly proportional to the difficulty of reaching the site. Those who made the trip wielded it like a badge of honor.

Interviewing warlords provided another such badge. Since the fall of the Taliban, journalists had rushed to report on the country's powerful regional commanders — Gul Agha in Kandahar, Ismail Khan in Herat, Rashid Dostum in Mazar-i-Sharif, Bacha Khan in Gardez. With their exotic dress, fierce body-

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guards, and rifles at the ready, stories about these men "write themselves," as one correspondent put it. And they are without doubt worth writing. As long as these commanders maintain their autonomy, the government in Kabul will have trouble imposing its authority.

While in Kabul, in fact, I felt the pressure to interview a warlord. I found one in Logar province, about an hour and a half south of Kabul. When I arrived, Fazellullah Mjadedi was holding court in the squat, white building that served as his headquarters. He fit all the specs: he was built like a bear, had a thick beard, and was surrounded by men toting Kalash-

nikovs. But he turned out to be a fairly decent man. In fact, he was a medical doctor. I came away feeling disappointed.

In the end, though, I would stumble upon the man who is Afghanistan's most important warlord, Mohammed Fahim. I would find him in the most unexpected of places: as defense minister in Kabul. And, to my amazement, few others seemed interested in him.

I first heard about Fahim before I left New York, in conversations with such experts on Afghanistan as Barnett Rubin at New York University and Peter Bouckaert and John Sifton at Human Rights

Watch. From them, I learned of the Panjshiris, a small but politically prominent subgroup of Tajiks from the Panjshir Valley, about three hours north of Kabul. The valley had been home to Ahmed Shah Massoud, the famed Northern Alliance commander. After Massoud was assassinated in an attack last September 9, his place as leader was divided up among several of his lieutenants. And after the fall of the Taliban, these men took control of three of the government's most important ministries: defense, Fahim; interior, Yunus Qanooni; and foreign affairs, Abdullah.

In Afghanistan, I began asking about them. One important source of information was my fixers. These local translators, the unsung reportorial heroes of Afghanistan, arrange interviews, suggest sources, relay news from the street, and get you into places you aren't meant to go. During my stay, I had two such fixers. Both were brilliant analysts of the Afghan scene. When I mentioned the Panjshiris, they explained how they were the real power inside the government, and how many of the country's majority Pashtuns deeply resented them.

From my interviews, I gradually began to learn more. A senior Afghan officer at a U.S. relief agency talked in hushed tones about his fear of the warlords in the government, as he described the Panjshiris. They were building a power base for themselves, one that made it dangerous for people like himself to speak out, so he asked that I not quote him. Later, when I raised the subject of the Panjshiris with a member of the *loya jirga* commission, which was preparing for the national assembly that would pick a transitional government in June, the man suddenly lowered his voice. Glancing furtively at a group of visiting elders, he confided his worries about the Panjshiris' power grab.

Of the three top Panjshiris, people kept singling out Mohammed Fahim. Abdullah and Qanooni were described as educated and urbane; Fahim was said to be crude and grasping. As the defense minister, he controlled the country's armed forces — made up, for the most part, of the remnants of the Northern Alliance army. Most of its soldiers were Tajiks and loyal to Fahim rather than to chairman Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun. In one telling anecdote, I learned that whenever John McColl, the British general who headed the international peacekeeping force, came to see him, Fahim made him wait an hour or more

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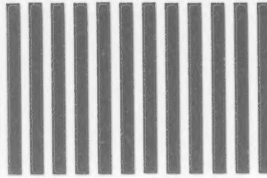
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to show who was boss. All in all, Fahim seemed by far the most powerful man in the country.

My time in Afghanistan was coming to an end, but I still had many questions about him. What, for instance, had been his role from 1992 to 1996, when Masoud's army — one of several occupying Kabul — had engaged in indiscriminate attacks that helped level much of the city? What were relations like between him and Karzai? Would the new Afghan army being trained under his direction simply enhance his power? And what was the nature of his contacts with the United States, now that the war was all but over? As a strong rival to Karzai, he was clearly an obstacle to U.S. efforts to build a stable government.

After my return to the U.S., I scoured the press for answers. I found none. When the loya jirga took place in mid-June, most papers treated it as a great triumph for Afghan democracy. For a more nuanced account, I had to go to the *New York Times* op-ed page. There, two delegates to the loya jirga, Omar Zakhilwal and Adeena Niazi, told how the hopes of the assembly for a truly representative government had

been dashed. "We delegates were denied anything more than a symbolic role in the selection process," they wrote. "A small group of Northern Alliance chieftains led by the Panjshiris decided everything behind closed doors and then dispatched Mr. Karzai to give us the bad news."

An even fuller report appeared on the Internet. It was written by Ahmed Rashid, the author of *Taliban*, and distributed by EurasiaNet, an online news service about Central Asia sponsored by the Open Society Institute. In it, Rashid described how at the loya jirga a groundswell of support had developed for Zahir Shah, the former king, but U.S. diplomats in Kabul had intervened to block it. According to Rashid, the United States preferred to continue supporting the Panjshiris because of their help in pursuing the remnants of the Taliban and al Qaeda. (An abbreviated version of this piece appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, for which Rashid sometimes writes.)

It was not until July 24 that the silence about Mohammed Fahim was really broken. On that day, *The Washington Post* ran a front-page story by Susan Glasser on the rivalry that was flaring between Karzai and Fahim, concentrat-

ed on the latter's control of the country's secret service. Still intact from the days of the Soviet occupation, that service had 30,000 employees and departments "run by ethnic Tajiks from the Northern Alliance who answer only to Fahim." It continued to use KGB-style methods to spy on and intimidate the local population. "To the ethnic Pashtun president and his supporters," Glasser noted, "the unchecked power of the Tajik-run secret service is a key obstacle to Afghan democracy that lies closer to home than either regional warlords who refuse to disarm their men or lurking remnants of the Taliban and al Qaeda." Two weeks later, the *Post*, in a piece by Glasser and Pamela Constable, described how the power struggle between Karzai and Fahim had recently intensified, raising "the alarming prospect of a return to the kind of violent political feuding that destroyed the country in the early 1990s."

It was not the type of story one wants to leave to the AP. ■

Michael Massing is a CJR contributing editor. His report on his visit to Afghanistan, "Losing the Peace?" appeared in the May 13, 2002, issue of The Nation.

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AMONG THE ACCUSED: Many of the 6,000 inmates at Rwanda's Central Prison say the government forced them to murder Tutsis.

Journalism and Genocide

*A Landmark Case In Rwanda
Raises the Issue: Can Words Kill? How Much
Press Freedom Is Too Much?*

BY DINA TEMPLE-RASTON

To understand why three journalists from Rwanda are on trial for war crimes, one must know that, in rural areas of that country, radio is king. The first thing Africans buy when they get a job is a radio. Even the poorest families haunt their neighbors' houses to catch snatches of government newscasts. "In Rwanda, the radio has become like the voice of God, telling people what to do," says Mary Kimani, a Kenyan journalist.

In 1994 the voices coming through the radio urged the killing of the Tutsi minority. "Rwandans didn't question. They acted," says Kimani, and the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis — and moderate Hutu — followed. Now, almost a decade later, some of the men behind those voices are on trial before a United Nations tribunal in Tanzania for their provocative words. With evidence of massacre still visible in a ruined landscape, emotions continue to run high. Yet, for the international media there is another issue: Can words kill? Should media executives be sentenced to life in prison for broadcasts and articles they sponsored, and thereby set a legal precedent that

some fear could haunt free speech around the world?

Ferdinand Nahimana, Hassan Ngeze, and Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza are the first journalists to be accused of crimes against humanity since Julius Streicher, the Nazi editor, was sent to the gallows by judges at Nuremberg in 1946. Nahimana and Barayagwiza founded a talk radio station called Radio Milles Collines that, in the months leading up to and during the 101 days of the 1994 Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi, became the most popular spot on the radio dial. Hassan Ngeze edited an extremist newspaper called *Kangura*, or *Wake It Up!* His anti-Tutsi screeds were a constant refrain on Radio Milles Collines.

Just as Julius Streicher had spent years honing his anti-Semitic message in the Nazi publication *Der Stürmer*, prosecutors at the tribunal say Radio Milles Collines and *Kangura* were part of a larger conspiracy to wage war against the Tutsi long before April 1994, when the genocide began. The new station hit the Rwandan airwaves in 1993, and from the start provided a soundtrack for an impending conflict. The lyrics in the music it played called on Hutu to kill Tutsi. Its newscasters told bawdy anti-Tutsi jokes. They broadcast the "Hutu Ten Com-

mandments" — pulled from the pages of *Kangura* — which, among other things, called on Hutu to show no mercy to the Tutsi minority, which was plotting, they said, to seize power in Rwanda.

Once the killing started, bands of Hutu went from house to house wielding machetes and looking for Tutsi to kill. Radio Milles Collines newscasters helpfully announced where key Tutsis were hiding. The station broadcast license plate numbers of cars carrying Tutsi and their Hutu sympathizers, and urged listeners to hunt them down. The station broadcast death tolls as if they were traffic reports. "The Rwandan government should supply us with tools, guns," said Kantano Habimana, a popular Milles Collines newscaster, to "kill the Inkotanyi." Inkotanyi is Kinyarwanda for cockroach, a Hutu nickname for Rwanda's Tutsi.

More than eight years later, U.N.-appointed prosecutors are trying Nahimana, Barayagwiza, and Ngeze for sparking such violence. Many defenders of a free press say this trio went beyond the pale. Joel Simon, the deputy director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, an organization devoted to press freedom, says, "To me, this was essentially a form of military communication to coordinate these attacks. It is speech that helped make it possible to carry out the genocide."

Other free-speech advocates, though, say the Rwanda trial could give ammunition to those who think press freedom has gone too far. "The currently fashionable phrase is 'American exceptional-

ism," says Fred Schauer, a Harvard law school professor. "Many countries think the U.S. overstates the importance of free speech and free press, and understates the importance of equality." While it is hard to imagine such a case in the United States, similar incitement questions were at the center of a recent case involving an anti-abortion Web site known as the Nuremberg Files. In May, a federal appeals court in San Francisco upheld a 1999 jury verdict that said that the Web site — which published "wanted"-style posters of abortion doctors, listed their names and addresses, and accused them of crimes against humanity — constituted an illegal threat and was not protected by the First Amendment.

Decisions against First Amendment protections are rare in the United States, and it isn't clear that judges at the U.N. tribunal convened in Arusha, Tanzania, will use a liberal U.S. standard in their decision. They could well decide that Nahimana, Barayagwiza, and Ngeze are guilty of incitement to genocide not because they directly caused specific deaths but because they obviously intended them.

The current precedent says that to prove incitement, prosecutors have to show a direct link between reports or speeches and murder — something lawyers call causation. Such a direct line between the radio broadcasts, the *Kangura* articles, and mass murder in Rwanda has been difficult to draw. Stephen Rapp, the American senior prosecutor in the case, has a difficult task. The names of individual genocide victims are not usually included in the evidence gathered by the tribunal. Instead, he has what amounts to circumstantial evidence — broadcast tapes and documents showing that Hutu extremists on staff at Radio Milles Collines and *Kangura* urged people to kill their Tutsi neighbors.

John Floyd, the Washington, D.C.-based defense attorney for Ngeze, frets that if the three tribunal judges decide that the tenuous connection between broadcast and massacre is enough to prove incitement, the case could set a stunningly broad international standard for prosecuting hate speech. "This is dangerous stuff," says Floyd. "This isn't just a question of press freedom. This is an issue of intellectual freedom. This would be like prosecuting the publisher



Floyd compares prosecuting Bikindi to "putting Bob Dylan on trial for protest songs."

At first glance, the three in the dock look too ordinary to be key players in such a drama. Nahimana is a fifty-one-year-old former history professor from the northwestern city of Ruhengeri who took charge of the Rwandan government's propaganda machine in the early 1990s. He is known as "the professor" by members of the tribunal, and often speaks up during the proceedings when the translation from Kinyarwanda to English to French is not accurate.

Barayagwiza, also in his early fifties, helped lead a stridently anti-Tutsi political party before serving as director of political affairs for the Rwandan Foreign Ministry in 1992. Ngeze was a bus fare collector before he started *Kangura*.

While spectators outside Rwanda worry about the case's press-freedom issues, inside this tiny country, the concerns are more fundamental. The question is whether three men whom many Rwandans see as partially responsible for setting neighbor against neighbor will be held accountable. If they are found not guilty, it will prove for many Rwandans that the culture of impunity which has reigned in Rwanda has emerged from the genocide unscathed.

The Central Prison, near the town of Cyangugu, houses 6,000 inmates, most of whom have been accused but not formally indicted — let alone tried — for genocide-related crimes. They wear pale pink safari shorts and shirts because the former government thought the rosy color was more in keeping with "rehabilitation." They caterwaul when they see footage of the three defendants on a makeshift movie screen, and seem to derive a certain satisfaction out of seeing once-powerful Rwandans flanked by guards in court. If you ask them, most of the prisoners say that the government ordered them to kill Tutsi. They had no choice. Politicians, military leaders, radio personalities all had the same re-

frain: Go do your work. And that meant killing Tutsi.

It is not easy for a foreigner to learn firsthand what the majority of the population really thinks about the trial. What is obvious behind the walls of Central Prison, though, is that these inmates — who sleep in shifts because the prison was built to hold a third as many prisoners — are keen to see the leaders of the genocide held responsible. And they think Nahimana, Barayagwiza, and Ngeze are among them.

While the Rwanda tribunal may be called an African Nuremberg, it lacks the drama of the original. When the judges at Nuremberg announced their verdicts on October 1, 1946, they acknowledged that Julius Streicher, the editor of *Der Stürmer* and the man who called himself the number one Nazi, was less directly involved in the physical commission of crimes against the Jews than the other military and political defendants. Even so, they found him guilty of crimes against humanity (genocide wasn't on the books yet) because he called for the extermination of the Jews in the pages of his newspaper. Even today, critics of the decision say that the verdict could be twisted to muzzle press freedom. They say that Streicher, while contemptible, should not have been sentenced to death for his ideas. That same concern casts a pall over the Rwanda trial.

Erik Møse, one of the three international judges presiding over the case and vice president of the tribunal, disagrees. He says the question is not whether the U.N. should set precedents such as this one, but why they waited so long to do so. "In my opinion, it is time for the United Nations to make a decision on this sort of thing," he said from his office inside the Arusha tribunal. "It has been more than fifty years since an international court has attempted to do this and it is about time someone set some limitations again."

The prosecution closed its arguments on July 12 — the trial's 163rd day — after an intense, two-week session during which prosecutor Rapp played for the court the thirty most incendiary Radio Milles Collines broadcasts he had on tape. The proceedings are adjourned until September 15, when the defense will begin with the testimony of Ferdinand Nahimana. A verdict is expected early next year. ■

Dina Temple-Raston is writing a book about Rwandan justice.



AP/WIDEWORLD/STEVE HUBER

WASHINGTON

NEW CLIMATE, OLD CULTURE



CAITIE BECK

Nineteen months after the Bush administration rode in on the heels of a dead-heat election decided by the Supreme Court, and twelve months after the searing events of September 11, Washington is an altered place. Changed, too, in many respects, is the journalism that comes out of there. The visceral memory of 9/11 may be fading in some cities, but not in our nation's capital. The city is not only a logical target for another attack, but headquarters of a war on terrorism that is still being defined, and the place where that war's next moves — Iraq? — will be shaped.

Yet it's a town with complicated subcultures that exist below the surface and do not bend even in a heavy wind. It's a company town, and the company is the United States government. If Washington is changed it is also unchanged, with journalistic institutions — The Washington Post, the Sunday talk shows, the leakings and briefings of legislators and lobbyists — that seem as permanent as the Lincoln Memorial. In the special report that begins here, we examine what is different now about journalism in Washington and what is all but eternal.

WORKING IN A WARTIME CAPITAL

An Uneasy Quiet and a Sense of Mission

BY TED GUP

The first signs that 9/11 has brought about a change in Washington journalism greeted me the moment I stepped off the elevator onto the fifth-floor newsroom of *The Washington Post*. An announcement beside the elevator reminded the staff that there would be an evacuation drill at eight, and another at midnight. There were other changes as well. The fifth-floor mailroom was gone, removed in the wake of the anthrax scare. Instead, a self-ventilated room had been set up on the floor below where all newsroom-bound mail was to be opened. Boxes of latex gloves and disposable masks were at the entrance. Inside was a memo offering "Some Characteristics of Suspicious Mail." A red bin carried the ominous warning, "Remove at Your Own Risk." The newsroom itself looked familiar enough, except for a poster of Osama bin Laden. "Wanted, Dead or Alive," it read, with a line drawn through the word "Alive."

These were a few physical manifestations of a post-9/11 world, but I was more interested in things less visible. My mandate was a broad one, to survey the landscape of Washington journalism and see what changes, if any, had been wrought by the September attacks, and to measure the tensions between the press and the administration of George W. Bush. I had worked twenty-one years as a reporter in Washington. Then, three years ago, I moved to Ohio. Now I had returned to see what might be different, and to gather the thoughts of former colleagues and others about what it is like to work there now.

I was duly cautioned by several of them that it is too early to know which changes are transient and which might be lasting. Good advice. So consider this merely a snapshot from midsummer 2002, as the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks approached.

It was a familiar picture in a way. Washington journalists have always tended to see themselves at the center of things, opening them up to charges of Beltway Blindness. But today they live

and work in a wartime capital that is indeed a focal point for an anxious nation and a troubled world. Not since Watergate have journalists felt such a strong sense of mission and responsibility. Most agree that Washington, their home, is a rich target. But those who cover what is simply called "the story" are riding a tide of adrenaline, sobriety, restraint.

For many Americans, in the shorthand of memory, September 11 has become synonymous with the loss of the World Trade Center. That 189 people died at the Pentagon and that a fourth airplane was heading toward the capital before battling passengers brought it crashing down sometimes feels like a historical footnote next to the spectacular loss of the towers. And while some of the reverberations of the terrorist attacks may have grown more faint in Phoenix or Kansas City or San Diego, they are still palpable here in Washington, which continues to feel itself in the terrorists' crosshairs. Citizens throughout the city share a sense that there is yet a second shoe to drop.

This was particularly true as the anniversary of 9/11 approached; the humid air of summer seemed that much heavier with apprehension, as the city bolstered its defenses. In July, a federal design panel approved \$800 million to enhance security in the capital, including more landscaped barriers and reinforced "street furniture," expanded buffer zones, stone benches and steel bollards.

Journalists, too, see and feel their city under invisible siege, off and on the job. "Every day when I go to work, I have to be scanned and mugged and swept and sniffed," says Mark Knoller, White House reporter for CBS Radio News. Hafez Al-Mirazi, the Washington bureau chief for al Jazeera, the Qatar-based Arabic-language TV news network, says he has had no thoughts about his personal safety, but others apparently do. Before September 11, he was negotiating with a real-estate agent to lease space for al Jazeera in the

Freedom Forum building. After the eleventh, he was told that tenants there were fearful he might become a target, and that he should look elsewhere.

But while journalists often report on potential nightmare scenarios, few express any personal concern. At *The Washington Post*, the antibiotic Cipro was made available to the staff during the anthrax crises and a handful of reporters apparently availed themselves of it. Counseling services are available but few have expressed the need for help with stress. Most reporters on the Big Story are totally absorbed in the work.

"I never think about danger, but that is my way of dealing with trouble — I deny it," says the *Post* columnist Mary McGrory over lunch with me and the White House correspondent Mike Allen. "I'm just heavily into denial," she says. "Maybe you think about it," she says, punting to Allen.

"People talk about it a lot," says Allen. "It used to be that when you were at the White House, you thought you were in the safest place in the world. People are no longer sure of that."

McGrory notes that covering JFK's death in 1963 helped her deal with the trauma of that event. "Don't you think when you're doing something about something that it lessens the emotion?" she asks. "If you're in the middle of it and you're doing something, it's somehow not as bad, would you say?" Then, with a glint of mischief, she asks Allen. "You are at the dangerous White House every day but you're busy. I'm assuming that it's dangerous — I'm respecting that point of view." Allen laughs cavalierly, and the subject is changed.

Besides, exposure to speculative risk pales beside the actual perils faced by colleagues. "Obviously," says Leonard Downie, Jr., the *Post's* executive editor, "all of us sitting here in this newsroom thinking maybe we're somehow vulnerable to something can only look with admiration and awe at what our foreign correspon-

Ted Gup, a former Washington Post and Time reporter, is the author of The Book of Honor: The Secret Lives And Deaths of CIA Operatives and is the Shirley Wormser Professor of Journalism at Case Western Reserve University. His email is tedgup@att.net.

WALTER SHAPIRO



Political columnist, *USA Today*

“What September 11 did is totally eliminate the feeling among those of us who have written endlessly about government and politics that there isn’t a moral imperative to this kind of reporting. Any idea that politics is all a game and that it doesn’t really matter who’s up and who’s down; that it’s all decoration and ersatz drama about semen-stained dresses — that idea died a few minutes before nine on the morning of September 11.

“I’ve been covering politics for twenty-five years and, in general, each cycle gets more scripted than the last. Before September 11, it was easy to feel that one was an extra in a political environment where the key players were David Letterman, Jay Leno, and Oprah. They were really the only ones who got to interview Gore and Bush in the waning weeks of the 2000 campaign. Too often there were times when I thought that politics resembled baseball, but that baseball had more social utility.

“There was also the sense that too much of covering politics was a gotcha game. Can we tarnish this judicial nominee, can we dredge up something from this candidate’s past? Nothing made me feel more awkward in my calling than the three-day flap in November 2000 about a George Bush drunk-driving arrest in Maine in the mid-1970s. We all knew that Bush was a drinker in those days. No one was hurt in the incident. I remember sitting next to a network news producer

talking on a cell phone as this story broke, and he was saying: ‘This is why I got into journalism.’ My stomach was turning because the story didn’t tell us a single new thing about Bush’s fitness or lack of fitness for the presidency. I mention this because it was so emblematic of the way trivia overwhelms substance.

“I used to joke about how Walter Lippmann got World War II, the cold war, and Vietnam, and I got stuck with Henry Hyde, Bob Barr, and Bill Clinton. But suddenly that whole conceit perished and we are in an entirely new world. Which means that — whether the story is military tribunals, the creation of a homeland security department, war drums reaching a crescendo about Iraq — all of this matters in a way that the yearly skirmishing on the budget doesn’t. So September 11 has changed my sense of calling as a journalist — the notion that one is part of history, not as comic opera but as part of a grand tragedy.

“This administration, more than any I can recall, believes in the Washington gospel of message discipline. There are no discordant voices on almost any issue. That fact diminishes one’s passion for obtaining interviews because when you do, like as not, the Bush official will be mentally reading from a public relations script.

“That has forced me back into the I.F. Stone model of digging into public documents and scrutinizing official utterances more so than I did during the more accessible — dare I say, let-it-all-hang-out — Clinton administration.”

dents do. We had reporters crossing the Hindu Kush in a driving snowstorm on horseback and reporters under fire and all kinds of grave difficulties. I do think that gives people in the newsroom perspective.”

But Downie, like his peers throughout the city, acknowledges that, for terrorists, Washington may be the ultimate target. Just as terrorists came back to the trade center after a failed attempt to bring the towers down, “One of the scenarios is that they still want to come back to Washington, that they have unfinished business here,” Downie says. “The plane that went down in Pennsylvania was headed for the

White House or the Capitol. And then we are reminded every day by the continuing upgrading of security arrangements around town. We’re reminded we’re a potential target. We don’t feel it’s inevitable, but we feel we’re in a different kind of location than Cleveland.”

The president has his “shadow government” in seclusion, so the press has attempted to ready itself. Just three blocks from the White House, the *Post* has developed detailed contingency plans. So too have other news organizations.

Knight Ridder’s Clark Hoyt, describing that bureau’s preparations, says: “We have

an emergency plan with a variety of scenarios in case we’re not able to work out of this building, whether the servers and the other vital equipment could be accessed remotely or whether they would also be down for some reason.” The bureau has put together phone trees for contacting staff if the office is inaccessible. Editors and reporters have been instructed on what to do and where to report, with temporary headquarters to be set up in the homes of those who have reliable Internet access or convenient locations. If the bureau needs “longer-term temporary” headquarters, Hoyt says, it has contacted “hotels in radiating rings going out from Washington that have the appropriate Internet access and facilities.” If all else fails, the bureau will rely on remote servers at Knight Ridder centers in San Jose and Miami.

Television news has also prepared for virtually any contingency. “We have plans galore for how to handle X crisis, Y crisis, with places we’d go if for some reason there’s a water emergency, a power emergency, a bomb emergency,” says ABC’s Robin Sproul. “We’d have different plans in place on how we would regroup and keep covering the story. We have upgraded the computer access so that if something happened in northern Virginia we have a Maryland place or two. And we have a deal with a person who has a satellite truck that’s sort of on-call to us. We keep that in far-out suburban Maryland.

“We’ve tried to anticipate every layer of shutdown and have something like a solution at every turning point,” says Sproul. “But there does come a point where there are no solutions.”

The sober circumstances are leavened with a newsroom’s usual black humor. I asked Downie if the *Post* has an order of succession in the event that he and his senior deputies are, to put it delicately, indisposed. “No,” he laughs, “in fact we were joking today that the Loudoun County *Extra* editor may be running the paper if there’s a direct hit on this building.”

Most Washington reporters, print and electronic alike, though they are keenly aware of Washington’s exposure, seem relatively unfazed. Not all, however. One veteran journalist, who in the past has not been easily rattled, now finds himself wracked by anxiety. He does not want his name used, fearing that candor will draw unwanted attention from his peers and his superiors — or even make him a target for terrorists. Since 9/11 his

work has required that he spend every day reporting on some aspect of "the story." He has lost weight and feels isolated and vulnerable.

"Some of the people who have access to sensitive classified materials," he says, "are the most scared. They say there is really scary stuff and the capabilities of the U.S. government are not matched up well. They know there are people loose in the country and they don't know who they are and they have no prospect of finding out. If you talk to people who get these classified reports they are freaked out. And that freaks me out.

"The weekends are my only escape — and getting home," he continues. "I try to seal off my life at home and I have restricted my flipping around on cable channels — I can't tell you how debilitating that was, how deranging. I don't watch as much cable news. I read good books and spend time with my family. I think reporters were more affected by this than they acknowledge. Friends and relatives around the country moved on, but those of us in New York or Washington are still in it. There is simply no escape from the grinding nature of it."

ABC's Robin Sproul is not subject to such anxieties but is sympathetic to those who are. "I haven't been to a social event, a business event, a charity event, or a gathering at school in which this is not the topic of discussion. I don't think I go anywhere, and probably most of my colleagues don't, where people who are not journalists don't want to know 'What are you hearing?' I get hit with that all the time."

And what she is hearing is not comforting. "People who are generally unshakable are very worried and that, of course, is scary," she says. "They generally say, 'It's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when.' You start with that as a given every day in Washington."

The *Post's* managing editor, Steve Coll, who has reported from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and the gulf war, says he came to terms with his own mortality before the current crises. "That's the price of being a foreign correspondent," he says. "The first time you realize that 'hey, it's okay,' it's a relief. I don't feel anxious about dying on the job — that is so liberating."

But Coll is also a husband and a father. "I try to communicate my sense of peace and confidence to my family, and try not to drag them into my equation," he says. "We have a family plan that in-

CLARENCE PAGE



Syndicated columnist;
Chicago Tribune
editorial board member

"There are so many more pundits in Washington than there used to be. Columnists like Walter Lippmann, Joseph Kraft, the Alsops, James Reston had an intimate relation with the White House, to the extent that they were invited over for tea. Now, you can't swing a dead cat in this town without hitting a pundit. We've been encouraged by the presence of so darned many cameras and microphones. I'm a pundit as well as a reporter. I spent twenty years being objective for the privilege of being subjective.

"After 9/11, the emphasis in Washington coverage shifted from domestic issues to foreign policy and defense, two areas to which the press and the public had given short shrift. We'd been in the Pax Americana, the post-cold-war period where readers and journalists were turning inward. That changed.

"Donald Rumsfeld, the secretary of defense, has emerged as the superstar of the camera, the Jascha Heifetz of the press briefing. He is thoroughly entertaining without being informative. It's a wonderful show. It entertains us all immensely, and the public, too. But it doesn't really tell us anything.

"Washington correspondents live off leaks. They are the mother's milk of Washington journalism. In the Bush years, we are running the risk of dying of thirst. We used to always joke about Clinton — about how many trial balloons that administration was floating. You couldn't tell the trial balloons from the genuine leaks, there were so many of them.

"There seems to be a real concern in the Bush administration about speaking with one voice. That appears to be a genetic trait of Republican administrations. We saw the same thing under Bush One and under Reagan.

"Democratic administrations are more like a union hiring hall. Or even worse, a university faculty."

cludes them going in an opposite direction and me coming into the office. My advice to them is to get in a car and go. We have a plan and a place to meet if communications fail, and I'll get there when I can — if it's as bad as that."

For Coll, such matters are not cause for panic, but simply reflect the new awareness that America's illusions of invulnerability have ended. "It's a common discussion to have these days," says Coll, "to think about life and family. This is what the rest of the world lives with. It's the human condition. No one granted us immunity." And where is the family meeting place? "That's a secret," he says, laughing. "It's classified."

Q: Is the Bush White House different post-9/11?

A: I'm the last person in the world to answer that question. They didn't return my calls before 9/11 and they haven't returned my calls since 9/11.

— Mary McGrory, columnist, Washington Post

As the first anniversary of the 9/11 attack approached, I asked dozens of seasoned reporters throughout the capital to reflect not only on what the events of 9/11 have meant for Washington journalism, but on how well the press is performing and whether the Bush White House stands apart from other administrations in its zeal to control information and access. Getting journalists to agree on anything is like herding quail — but some broad patterns and shared observations emerged, some common misgivings and apprehensions, and some hopes and aspirations, tempered with the usual journalistic tinctures of cynicism and altruism.

Long before 9/11, which happened to be David Broder's seventy-second birthday, he sensed that there was something different about this administration. It was apparent, he says, even on a visit to transition headquarters, a place that, in past administrations, was filled with young people "gossiping like crazy" and chit-chatting about their new jobs. What Broder found instead was a kind of corporate regimentation. "I was struck by the difference," he recalls. "This was so controlled." Neither Broder nor many other Washington reporters say the Bush administration has shown the deep hostility toward the press of the Nixon administration or the final months of the Clinton White House. "I don't think they are looking for a fight," Broder says, "but they are certainly looking for control of

Guess Who's Not Coming to Dinner

BY ROXANNE ROBERTS

It's been a year since Katharine Graham died, and like so many of us in Washington, I miss her.

I miss her because she was smart, brave, and funny in unexpected ways. She was kind and generous to so many people, especially women. And I miss her because she gave great dinner parties.

Her last grand party was for President Bush in February of 2001, just a month after the inauguration. The guest list included Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Steve Case, Alan Greenspan, Colin Powell, Commerce Secretary Don Evans, Henry Kissinger, Vernon Jordan, and Ethel Kennedy. There were a few media types: Diane Sawyer, Barbara Walters, Andrea Mitchell, Al Hunt and Judy Woodruff, Ben Bradlee and Sally Quinn, Jim and Kate Lehrer, George Will, Howell Raines, Margaret Carlson, and the top brass from *The Washington Post* — all invited to welcome Dubya to the nation's capital.

"He's been awfully nice in every way to reach out to Washington," said Graham. "It makes a lot of difference in the feelings of people in this town." She was being kind; the president's dislike for Washington was an open secret, and this dinner marked his first real effort to break bread with the "permanent establishment."

As the *Post's* social reporter, I was assigned to write about the event. I sat in her office and asked for help. She was wildly apologetic but no, she couldn't give me the guest list. No, she wouldn't let me stand on her front step and interview those guests. And no,

information. The word I would use is 'corporate' — both internally and externally. They had the attitude that one way in which they could control the agenda is controlling the flow of information." The *New York Times* writer Bill Keller recently wrote of the administration's "secretive, country-club executive style."

Those who are seen to undermine that control are called to account. At the White House, *Post* reporter Mike Allen



she wouldn't call me after the party to give me details. Her dinners, she explained, were always strictly off-the-record. But coverage of the parties is not the point; it's what transpired there.

Graham's death didn't kill off the Washington dinner party — an endangered institution for many years — but it marked the end of an era. For decades, politicians and journalists of every stripe gathered at tables and, for a few hours, pretended to like each other. Sometimes they actually became friends. The operating assumption was that everyone in Washington had a common purpose: a stronger, better United States. They might differ on the means to achieve that, but the end was never in doubt. At the very least, everyone had a better sense of whom they were dealing with.

It laid the basis for smarter journalism, too. Listen, anything that allows us more insight and clarity is all to the good. In Washington, a dinner party is an extension

of the workday, but the mask is slightly different, the guard lowered just a bit. Sit next to a cabinet secretary or a senator for an hour and you can't help but get a better sense of what makes this person tick. (Sit next to a spouse and you learn even more.) The more we understand, the more thoughtful and measured we can be in our reporting and writing.

Not everyone shares this view. In fact, there are plenty who see Washington as a modern Sodom and Gomorrah, where souls are lost somewhere between the herbed rack of lamb and demitasse. Newt Gingrich swept into power in 1995 and coolly informed his

decision until he's stood in the Rose Garden and announced it."

Barbara Cochran, a former CBS bureau chief and president of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, puts it strongly: "A frightening suppression of the news," she says. She and other longtime reporters note that a number of factors compound the problem. First, the much-discussed question of how critically to report on an administration that is

recalls that following a story he wrote about the decision to reopen Reagan National Airport, the president himself "made quite a sarcastic remark" to someone wrongly suspected of being a source on the story. On other stories, Allen says, the White House will deny until the very last moment that the president has reached a final policy decision, thereby maintaining control of the story. Says Allen, "They don't consider it a final

conservative flock that the seductions of the soiree were dangerous and corrupt. Won't dance, don't ask them.

"Those of us who are part of the revolution didn't come into politics and Washington to join the present establishment or influence that establishment," Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform, told me at the height of Gingrich's Grass Roots Chic. "We didn't come to get invitations to their dinner parties or their receptions."

P.J. O'Rourke was even more withering. "Why dine with scum?" he shrugged. "It's important to understand that not everybody on the other side are scum. But there are enough of them."

Liberals, or what passed for them, were equally wary. Bill Clinton, despite his extravagant political gifts, seldom dipped into Washington's social sea, which offended and annoyed the natives. You might think, then, that the Monica Lewinsky scandal had social Washington rubbing its hands in glee. Mostly, though, folks here were miserable. It deeply pained them that the office of the president had been sullied.

News flash: people are complicated, maddening creatures. Life is seldom divided neatly into black and white, which is bad news for the hungry young Turks out to pen that oh-so-clever exegesis on the state of the nation. The other news flash: journalists are human (gasp!), too. We have marriages, hobbies, passions, kids, feelings. A simple, civil conversation about "nothing" can lead to mutual respect, which occasionally develops into trust.

A few years ago, Vernon Jordan came roaring up during a dinner dance at the British embassy. Our previous conversations had been cordial. Looming over me, he yelled about my coverage of a state dinner. I yelled back. It was a brief and fair fight, then we shook hands. He thought he won, I thought I won, so we were both happy. I remember the incident because it was, in a weird way, respectful.

And that's the real point. You don't have to like someone. You don't have to agree. But respect is essential.

I covered the dinner celebrating the 200th anniversary of the White House just two nights after the 2000 presidential election. Guests included all the living presidents except Ronald Reagan. The election outcome was uncertain and tensions, understandably, sky-high. But George and Barbara Bush showed up anyway. We all waited to see if the Clintons and Bushes would start throwing food at each other, but all were on their best behavior. George Bush gave a gracious and kind speech about the history and staff of the executive mansion. It was a classy performance, and I found myself once again admiring his grace and manners.

Close friends of his son tell me, "If you got to know him, you'd really like him." To be honest, I've been impressed by the presi-

dent's old friends, who clearly admire and enjoy him. But this administration walked into Washington with a big chip on its shoulder and kept behind closed doors. The horrors of September 11 and the anthrax deaths reinforced the bunker mentality — in the light of that, who cared about what got said at parties?

But just three weeks after the terrorists attacks, I sat next to a wealthy Democratic fundraiser, who was full of praise for the president's leadership and then confided, "I've been thinking, and I'm not going to do any more partisan stuff." And I thought, what if everyone feels this way? How will it change Washington?

It was, of course, too good to be true. Washington is back to the nasty business of treating each other like enemies.

For my part, I'm whining about state dinners. This quaint little ritual is about as feel-good as it gets — warm, fuzzy global partnerships. It's almost impossible to write a negative story. So what does this White House do? At the first dinner, for the Mexican President, Vicente Fox, they declared most of it "closed" and made it damned near impossible even to talk to the guests. For the second dinner, in July, I promised myself I would not lose my temper — then, of course, I lost my temper when we were treated like dirt, locked in the East Room to prevent us from even watching the president mingle with guests, and generally regarded as mosquitoes at a nudist convention.

Respect? You must be joking.

Perhaps there's an upside to all this. No more cozy inside deals over brandy. Fresh DNA in the Washington party pool. Good riddance to the Inside the Beltways and clueless, co-opted Establishment hacks! Except we're not. Our job is to ferret out the truth, to be there: at press conferences, on Air Force One, and yes, even at parties.

The day after Mrs. Graham's party for Dubya, the phone at my desk rang. She was calling to apologize, once again, for not letting me cover the dinner — and thanked me for getting the story right anyway. She had no juicy gossip to pass on; no telling moment that suddenly illuminated the heart and mind of the new president.

She had just one tiny correction: I'd reported that the meal began with caviar. "There really wasn't much caviar," she explained. "It was just a little bit of caviar on those little potatoes."

She wasn't nitpicking; she just didn't want people to think she was the kind of person who, well, served big mounds of caviar at her parties.

"Mrs. Graham," I laughed, "I don't think anybody was paying attention to the menu." •

Roxanne Roberts has been covering parties for The Washington Post for fourteen years.

waging a largely invisible war — the fear that vigorously challenging the administration's stranglehold on information may appear to be unpatriotic. (The president, of course, remains more popular than the press.) Secondly, Democrats, as the opposition party, might once have been counted on to challenge administration policy and to provide information withheld by the White House. But Democrats, too, have been reticent, say re-

porters, at least until the spate of corporate scandals and the approach of congressional elections.

Finally, administration efforts to maintain a tight hold on ultrasensitive subjects have been indirectly aided by the crush of news. For example, suggests the *Post's* Steve Coll, the Afghan war, important as it was, absorbed massive reportorial energy and resources that might have gone into ferreting out, for

instance, the full scope and nature of the government detentions of immigrants or the political and human rights implications of America's liaisons with foreign intelligence agencies.

Many journalists also acknowledge that some of the pressure they feel on the job in Washington now is self-imposed. "It's crossed my mind from time to time that you don't want people to think you're unpatriotic," says NPR's Nina

NINA TOTENBERG



COURTESY OF NPR

National Public Radio, legal affairs correspondent

"This administration has brought the manipulating of information to a new high. In previous administrations, I could call people up and ask for information on X, Y, and Z. I made some good friends that way, and it was mutually beneficial. Now, if I don't have a longtime relationship with an official, forget it.

"I deal with the Department of Justice. When you do an interview there, a press officer is always present to listen in — which is very unhelpful, by and large. Shortly after 9/11, I arranged an interview with Michael Chertoff, the head of the criminal division — a very able guy — and I was surprised to find a press person sit-

ting in on the whole thing. I'm used to having that when you interview the attorney general. But nobody moves without a watcher over there.

"I find that most interviews with administration officials these days are pretty canned. I've never seen an interview with Condoleezza Rice, the national security adviser, where I didn't feel that a cassette was playing in her head.

"Being interviewed about shady business dealings is tough on any administration. You didn't see the Clinton administration talking about theirs either. The Bush White House has a Freedom of Information Act policy that they have formally rewritten, and which errs on the side of nondisclosure. Material that was routinely available in the past is no longer available."

Totenberg. "But lots of things cross my mind. It's not necessarily a bad thing, you just sort of have to live with it." She remembers once telling Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell "the only thing I hate about my job is that some people hate my guts." His response: "You can't worry about that."

"Well, I do worry about that," admits Totenberg.

That worry, multiplied across the profession, has caught the eye of the *Post's* media reporter Howard Kurtz, particularly as applied to writers of opinion. "Very few columnists and commentators these days are willing to challenge the administration on the basic prosecution of the war on terrorism. There is a certain radioactive element to the war on terrorism, and any journalist has got to be awfully confident and awfully careful before challenging the president and his team on that subject."

Among most reporters, the first weeks after September 11 were generally characterized by a deferential tone toward government officials and by appeals to patriotism. "There was a strong sense among all American journalists in Washington that we were citizens and that this was an attack on the United States," says John McWethy, ABC's chief national security correspondent. "I think it has taken journalists many months to sort out

what their roles as journalists are versus what their role as citizens should be."

McWethy still sees one symptom of this ambiguity and it bothers him — the use of the word "we" in press conferences and briefings when reporters are referring to the U.S. government or to U.S. forces. McWethy estimates that half the questions asked at Pentagon briefings now begin with a reporter asking "Why don't we" or some variation. "It's just something I am sensitive to," he says. "American journalists pride themselves on being independent from the government, and when they say 'we' they blur the distinction."

Many reporters, though by no means all, say that this administration holds a tighter control over information than its predecessors, and that it suffers from less dissension. Among these is Bill Plante of CBS, who has been covering the White House for eighteen years. "They enforce this by keeping the press secretary in a position where they often don't tell him some things because they want him to have deniability," says Plante. But Plante's colleague at CBS Radio, Mark Knoller, who's covered six presidents, takes a different view. "Every administration I've covered," says Knoller, "has tried to control and manipulate the information with varying degrees of success. We had to fight for information then as now."

But at Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon or John Ashcroft's Justice Department, get-

ting at the reality behind the rhetoric can be hard slogging. Rumsfeld regularly rants about leaks and an irresponsible press. He has called for a full investigation of a July 12 leak to *The New York Times* about U.S. war plans for Iraq. Even some stalwart sources have second thoughts about talking to reporters, fearing investigations and polygraph tests. Now the FBI is even investigating members of Congress who serve on the intelligence oversight committees. The administration is trying to find out who leaked information to the press regarding intelligence lapses before 9/11 and, if nothing else, to send a chill through those who would contemplate future leaks.

Ironically, the source of many recent leaks is not Congress but the military itself. The more pressure is brought to bear to stifle debate, the more adamant these leakers are to get information out. Thomas E. Ricks, who covers the military for *The Washington Post*, says there is a clear pattern to the leaks regarding the prospect of war with Iraq. "The guys who were the junior officers in late Vietnam, that is to say the second lieutenants and platoon leaders of the early 70s, those guys are now three-star and four-star generals and for thirty years one of the major lessons of Vietnam that they dwelled on is, 'Don't go to war without the informed consent and backing of the American people,'" says Ricks. And so some within the military have broken ranks and, ignoring the iron strictures of Rumsfeld, conducted stealth campaigns to foment the sort of public debate that this administration has gone to great lengths to suppress.

Ricks has reviewed every word Rumsfeld has said in press conferences and interviews since last September and what he sees disturbs him. "Hard facts are few and far between," he says. In fact, none of the principle revelations of the war in Afghanistan — the first stationing of American troops on former Soviet soil in Uzbekistan, the first firing of a missile by an unmanned aerial vehicle, the first fielding of a significant CIA paramilitary force since Vietnam — none of these, says Ricks, have been disclosed by Rumsfeld in his briefings.

At the Justice Department, Totenberg notes, contact with the media is monitored and a representative from the press office sits in on interviews. Reporters don't need to be told what a chilling effect such a presence can have.

One of the questions that hangs over Washington journalism today is whether the press has been aggressive enough in

pursuing answers, particularly with regard to detentions and the treatment of those being held whose names and alleged offenses are cloaked in secrecy. While some news organizations have devoted considerable resources to crack that secrecy and to hold government accountable for potential violations of civil liberties, they have had limited success.

"The press has been astonishingly muted about these detentions," says *Newsweek's* Evan Thomas. "I think this relates to people being afraid. They want to keep these potential terrorists — even if they're not — behind bars. Journalists are occasionally people. They share the same fears of terrorism, and they are more willing to look the other way because of that. I am sure that we will decide in retrospect that we went soft on the administration and let them get away with too much. It's inevitable."

Nearly a year after 9/11, another change is apparent to many Washington journalists — their definition of news. To appreciate this, one need only look back to the months preceding 9/11. As others have noted, the summer of 2001 was marked by the hysteria of shark attacks, the last remnants of the most begrudging presidential election in history, and, of course, the tawdry affairs of an obscure California congressman and a missing intern. "We had reached a very low ebb on the Condit story by August," remembers Evan Thomas. "I remember being on *This Week* with Sam and Cokie and wondering, 'What the hell am I doing here?' We were just mindlessly bashing Condit. That was a particular low point."

For many, the embarrassment and discomfort that went along with that spate of stories was swept clean away by the events of 9/11. In their stead, reporters found a restored sense of journalistic mission. They were debating issues of substance — secrecy, civil liberties, foreign policy — rather than the stains on Monica's dress.

Paul K. McMasters, First Amendment ombudsman for the Freedom Forum, says that before 9/11 the credibility of journalists — certainly Washington journalists — was at a low point because of "sensationalism, superficiality, and softness." At least in the short term, he says, Washington reporters enjoyed a surge in public esteem as they covered the crisis. "In some ways," says McMasters, "the Washington press corps is the canary in the coal mine for the press."

GWEN IFILL

Moderator, *Washington Week*;
contributor, *The NewsHour* with Jim Lehrer



"I don't see a whole lot of change in the way Washington is being covered now. Fundamentally, it's about the same as it was in

the Clinton administration, or the first Bush administration, where you never felt you were getting the whole story the first time. In many ways it's probably just as frustrating, but not different. I remember many days covering the Clinton White House, trying to get clear answers to questions and failing, even though they were famously known for being far less disciplined than the current Bush White House.

"If there is a difference, after 9/11, it's that many Americans now pay closer attention to the news, so that people like me, who make a living trying to explain to people why Washington matters, don't have to make that case quite so strongly any more. People get that now.

"What hasn't changed is that Americans generally care mostly about the

things that affect their lives. Nine-one-one demonstrated to them that what happens in countries with capitals they couldn't pronounce before does, in fact, affect their lives, so they pay closer attention. What we don't know is how long that will continue, what with the stock market tanking, and more immediate concerns.

"People ask me what it was that prepared me for my career in covering Washington. The answer is: the kinds of jobs where you have to keep asking the questions, keep digging, keep scraping. The same is true in covering dog-catcher elections. If you're doing your job as a straight reporter, rather than as an opinion columnist, it comes down to the questions you ask, how you ask them, and the assiduousness with which you follow up.

"Getting guests for a program like the *NewsHour* isn't any more difficult now than it used to be because officials come out when they have something they want to say. The challenge is to get a wide range of voices to explain things."

Hard News is king again, with national security front and center. But various domestic stories, Wall Street excepted, have sometimes had to claw for air time and column inches. Washington reporters, once stereotyped as caught up in the minutiae of the capital, now find themselves increasingly covering subjects that know no boundaries and that integrate the foreign and domestic into a seamless story. Ironically, as Washington has looked beyond itself, it has become more central.

And there is a sense that news emanating from Washington is not only chronicling history but shaping it. Says Bill Plante: "The concerns I've expressed, the kinds of choices we make, the affects on civil liberties — those are any reporter's concerns. Our role is to be the watchdog, the town crier, to let people know what's happening.

"The question of whether we are going too easy on these people is one that depends on who's doing the asking," he says, "but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be called to account. This is a difficult time in the nation's life. The

choices we make today may have a very lasting impact. So, in that sense, our role is very important and we ought to take great pains to do it well."

The *Post's* ombudsman, Michael Getler, sees 9/11 as further evidence of the need for journalism in Washington and the rest of the country to practice what he calls "alertness." Not unlike the intelligence agencies that have been taken to task for failing to detect and thwart the attacks of 9/11, journalism, too, was lax in preparing the nation either for the attacks or for the foreign hostilities that seethed behind them. Journalism, says Getler, has a responsibility to be vigilant and to recognize what really matters in the morass of stories that daily confronts and sometimes confounds it.

To Leonard Downie I give the final word, because there is none. He is convinced it is premature to speak of the legacy of 9/11 on Washington journalism, that we are only midstory. "How long the changes will last, I don't know," he says. "Clearly other things are going to happen." ■

THE MAGAZINE OF RESTORATION WASHINGTON

National Journal's *Combination of Hard-Won Fact and Original Thought Seems to Work in the Post-9/11 Era*



BY LORRAINE ADAMS

Washington, after a decade of bimbology and two decades of antigovernment passion, has regained some measure of respect. "Inside the Beltway" used to be synonymous only with being out of touch. Now, to be inside Interstate 495 is to be where 189 people lost their lives in the Pentagon attacks. It is to be close to the public servants who will either figure out how to protect the rest of us from fanatical mass killers, or die alongside us. In this new world, the power fiefdoms of the nineties are in deep quaver. Corporations hire criminal defense attorneys. Wall Street worries. Silicon Valley slumps in the distance.

The magazine of Restoration Washington is the *National Journal*. Its values, like those of Augustan Rome or Dryden's Britain, are intelligence, lucidity, moderation, good taste. Its virtues unite partisans from Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts ("enormously helpful and useful") to Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah ("must reading... comprehensive and fair"). It is true that few outside a thirty-block radius of the White House and Capitol Hill see the *National Journal*. Its circulation is only 10,000. But it is a platinum coterie of men and women who make decisions that affect mil-

lions. Congress, the White House, federal agencies, the lobbyists who chase them and the media that cover them — all read the *National Journal*. "They're a luxury good," says Jodie T. Allen, former editor of *Outlook*, *The Washington Post's* opinion section, and now a top *U.S. News & World Report* editor. "They're very, very strong."

At the Delta and US Air shuttles, you often find foot-high stacks of *The Weekly Standard*, *The New Republic*, and other magazines for free. The *National Journal* is never gratis. Subscribers pay \$1,499 a year. In the marketplace of ideas, the *National Journal* is akin to a new Mercedes in a used-car lot. Sometimes, that has led people to dismiss it as excellent but staid. As Howard Kurtz, who covers media for *The Washington Post* puts it, "The *National Journal* does some very high-quality work, but it's rather low on the buzz meter because of its limited and costly circulation."

Buzz, contrary to popular belief, does not translate into money. The *National Journal* Group's revenues, profits, circulation, advertising, and staff have doubled since a below-the-radar Washingtonian named David G. Bradley bought it for \$11 million in 1997. Bradley now presides over a staff of 200 and annual re-

venues of \$30 million. "While everyone else's strategy was cut, cut, cut," says publisher John Fox Sullivan, "we took the opposite one — invest, invest, invest."

The Weekly Standard and *The New Republic*, both generators of buzz, have lost money for years. This past summer, two blocks from Sullivan's offices, *The Weekly Standard's* lean staff of twenty-seven was having its editorial meeting around a conference table that owner Rupert Murdoch salvaged from *Mirabella*, his defunct fashion magazine. Six blocks east at *The New Republic*, owners Martin Peretz and the New York businessmen Roger Hertog and Michael Steinhardt shrunk; much of the staff voluntarily took a 10 percent salary cut.

"The last time I was in Washington, I was shocked by how little conversation centered around the opinion-driven weeklies," said David Carr, who covers the media for *The New York Times*, speaking only for himself. "There seems to be kind of an era of postpunditry where people are seeking data rather than opinions about data. The reason the *National Journal* lands the way it does, which is with quite a bit of impact, is the utility. I think there's been a loss of altitude in terms of what one person thinks about what another person thinks."

The *National Journal* was founded in 1969 by two New Yorkers, an investment banker and a lawyer, who wanted to create a publication that would be to the executive branch what *Congressional Quarterly* was to Congress. "It went through a ton of money, a gazillion people and lots of turmoil," says publisher Sullivan. In 1975 the investment banker bowed out, leaving only the lawyer, who hired Sullivan from *Newsweek*. Sulli-



National Journal owner David Bradley, publisher John Fox Sullivan, editor Charles Green

van helped invent the concept that holds today. The new team abandoned the White House-only approach. It made all of federal government its playground.

"We decided this is the highest-stakes, most interesting game in the world," Sullivan explains. "The magazine that covers this game should be nonpartisan, nonideological. But not encyclopedic — we would pick and choose. We would be forward-looking — not what happened last week, but what might happen next year, the next ten years. We would write about issues in depth. But we would never say who should win this game. At most we would write about who was behind it, and what their strategies were."

By 1986, financial stability, Sullivan said, had proved elusive; the founding lawyer was ready to sell, and Times Mirror was ready to buy. Under Times Mirror ownership, *Government Executive*, a monthly magazine for senior federal managers, was purchased. And the National Journal Group started a twice-daily news service covering Capitol Hill called *CongressDaily*. When the General Mills executive Mark H. Willes took over Times Mirror to cut costs, he famously killed *New York Newsday*; a less noticed move was his decision to sell the National Journal Group.

The new owner, Bradley, continued selectively buying properties to add to the group. Today, his media Liechtenstein includes the original Times Mirror purchases; *The Hotline*, a daily log of news on politics and campaigns; *Technology Daily*, a news digest on information-technology politics and policy; *American Health Line*, a daily briefing on health-care politics, policy, and business; *The Capital Source*, a directory of Washington organizations, and *The Federal Technology Source*, a directory of the federal technology community.

Where does this media principality fit into the United Nations of political weeklies? Right- or left-leaning opinion was verboten at any *National Journal* publication, until Bradley. He decided to recruit columnists whose writing was creative and whose politics were unpredictable. Jonathan Rauch, openly gay, wants gay marriage legalized but gay hate crimes left to criminal statutes. Tish Durkin has a wickedly trenchant perspective on political culture, its ideology under constant reconstruction. Stuart Taylor Jr. has ecumenical brilliance on legal affairs.



Some of the magazines about politics that Washington reads

These untrammelled minds take up the front of the magazine. The rest of the book offers extremely smart reporters, under no duress to follow the herd, writing pieces saturated in insight based on hard-won information. First come the features — three pieces up to 4,000 words each on topical issues such as terrorism, or in-depth takeouts on national security, the economy, lobbying, and other issues. "Hardball," for instance, (July 6) reported on the opening of a political fund-raising arm by Major League Baseball; "Drugs on Trial" (August 3) presented detailed recommendations to the Federal Drug Administration for improving clinical drug trials. Then come the "Sections" — Congress, Administration, Issues & Ideas, Lobbying & Law, Politics. Readers find White House, congressional, and other beat reporters summing up the week or delivering sto-

ries the dailies overlook — a profile of Attorney General John D. Ashcroft's most trusted aide or a look at how a measure backed by the pharmaceutical industry got attached to a bioterrorism bill. Readers also get condensed reports from *CongressDaily* and *Hotline*. The Issues & Ideas section features the highly regarded media critic William Powers. The magazine closes with analytic political columnists such as Charlie Cook and William Schneider.

There is something about the uncertainties and urgencies of post-9/11 Washington that makes the combination of reported fact and original thought potent. And there isn't another political weekly that approaches politics this way. The closest might be *The New Republic*. Founded in 1914, today's *New Republic* has nurtured an identifiable signature piece, the strategy of which is

WARREN STROBEL



Foreign affairs
correspondent,
Knight Ridder

"In the first four or five months after 9/11, there was a real sense that, as a journalist, you

didn't want to be unpatriotic. There just was a feeling that it wasn't the right time to be overly critical of the president. That has eased off some.

"Though we hate to admit it, we're a little reluctant to criticize a president who has high approval ratings. In a perfect world, that shouldn't happen, but it does.

"The bureau chief here, John Walcott, and I broke a story earlier this year about how President Bush had essentially made the decision to have Saddam Hussein removed from power. He hadn't decided on the means. The story ran on the front pages of Knight Ridder newspapers. I got dozens of angry e-mails calling me a traitor, saying, 'How could you reveal our military plans?' — even though I'd written nothing about operational or military preparations.

"After 9/11, you had an administration that's divided on some foreign-policy and national security issues among the moderates and the hard-liners. When there are internal disagreements, it's a little easier to get to talk to officials, and have them talk out of school, and give you a more honest sense of what's going on.

"Still, the Bush administration seeks to control information and the daily message more than just about any other administration I've seen, and that covers four of them now. There are tremendous penalties, psychological and otherwise, levied on officials who talk out of turn, or deviate from the message.

"There's so much going on in Washington now that it does reinforce the sense that this is the place to be in terms of the news. There's a lot less coverage of some foreign-policy issues, ones that don't relate to terrorism — AIDS, Latin America, China. They're a little harder to get into the paper."

to upend a previously unexamined, prevailing idea. This piece, done well, guarantees surprise, and sometimes delivers enlightenment. And to the extent it has writers who can pull it off without contrarian artifice, the magazine embodies intellectual agility and flex. Among some of its best counterintuitive pieces have been Jonathan Chait's "This Man Is Not a Republican," the first to cast John McCain as a heretic among the party's right; Michelle Cottle debunking the Democratic Louisiana Senator John Breaux's reputation as a dealmaker; and Rob Walker on the overrated acumen of General Electric's Jack Welch.

The New Republic's pro-Israel advocacy too often confines it to a hermetically sealed foreign-policy universe, with new ideas rarely getting in or out, and predictability the necessary result. Its circulation has been flat at about 85,000, its financial losses perennial. Last year, owner Martin Peretz sold part of the magazine to two New Yorkers who are also funding the start-up of the New York newspaper *The Sun*. The none-too-cosseted staff was moved to cheaper quarters.

National Review, founded in 1955 by William F. Buckley Jr., has a 150,000 circulation. Although editor Rich Lowry is a regular on the political talk-show circuit, the magazine, partly because it is based in New York, is less than hot in Washington. That designation belongs to *The Weekly Standard*, founded in 1995 by William Kristol, John Podhoretz, and Fred Barnes. "It became an important Washington player almost immediately," says Kurtz. "It announced its independence from the Republican establishment by ticking off Bob Dole and George W. Bush."

Since September 11, the magazine has articulated positions on foreign policy that the Bush administration has come around to supporting — using full force in Afghanistan after early tepid going, invading Iraq, and democratizing Palestine. "Where Bush has gotten is where we have been," Kristol says. "Since 9/11, there's a feeling here, 'You're in a real debate that's consequential.'" Barnes, who in 2000 supported Bush while Kristol supported McCain, has been unafraid to scold the administration despite his pro-W leaning. A recent piece of his praised Bush for what is called his principled stands on big issues like taxes, cloning, the Kyoto treaty, the war on terrorism, missile defense, and federal judges, but was critical of his "shamelessly pragmatic" straying on smaller issues — supporting farm subsi-

dies and campaign finance reform, folding on vouchers and protectionist trade measures, and opposing ethnic profiling and arming pilots.

There is a dynasty-making flavor to the *Standard* — in its short existence, it has become a better-than-average spotter of young talent. Among its discoveries are David Brooks, Christopher Caldwell, and Tucker Carlson. Still, taking on Republican orthodoxy and finding great writers has not increased circulation or profit. Funded from the start by Murdoch, its circulation is about 60,000, maybe "down a tad," says Kristol, since 9/11. "And it's still losing money," he adds.

This fall Patrick Buchanan, backed by the Greek shipping magnate Taki Theodoracopulos, is scheduled to introduce a new Washington biweekly called *The American Conservative*. The magazine is expected to challenge *The Weekly Standard*, particularly its support for free trade and internationalism.

On the left, *The Nation*, founded in 1865 by abolitionists, has had little relevance in Washington for the last decade. Interestingly, after September 11, *The Nation* says its 102,000 circulation has climbed closer to 118,000. *The American Prospect*, a biweekly founded in 1990 by Robert Reich (later Bill Clinton's secretary of labor), editor Robert Kuttner, and the Pulitzer-winner Paul Starr, has grown since 2001, jumping from 27,000 circulation to 47,000. It calls itself "resolutely liberal"; an August 26 article, for example, typically urged Democrats to take more advantage of President Bush's handling of the economy. Among its contributors are Molly Ivins, Lani Guinier, Jane Mayer, Sissela Bok, Ralph Nader, and Amartya Sen.

Although he denies it — every media profile dwells on his soft-spoken self-effacement — *The National Journal* would not be where it is today without David Bradley. And it took him a long time to get to it. Born in 1953 in Washington, Bradley was, in his own words, "a deeply disagreeable young person. A little Curtis LeMay." He set his sights, "insufferably," he says, on running for the Senate by the time he was thirty. He was a Republican at fifteen. At eighteen, he earned \$60 a week working for the infamous Committee to Re-Elect the President.

He earned his B.A. in political science at Swarthmore, his MBA at Harvard, and his law degree at Georgetown. In 1979 he started a research firm whose flawed and soon-ditched objective was to conduct re-

KATE O'BEIRNE



Washington editor, *National Review*; CNN's *The Capital Gang*

"Compared to a year ago, Washington is a different city, with an agenda that nobody could have predicted. Did anybody mention Afghanistan during the 2000 campaign? George Bush was accused of knowing nothing about foreign affairs. Now he's a war president. The success of his tenure will be dictated by his success internationally. From a journalism point of view, that makes things far more interesting. The stakes are enormously high. We were all caught up, deeply engaged by the events of the 90s, but, in retrospect, they seem trifling.

"When we see a president with a 70 percent personal approval rating, as President Bush has enjoyed, we at *National Review* are deeply suspicious that he's not doing the right thing. He ought to be spending some of that political capital to advance conservative causes. If he were at 50 percent in the polls, we'd be offering advice on how to boost those numbers. Right now, our advice is: 'Cut that 70 percent. Do something.'"

search on any question for any company in any industry. "It was just awful," Bradley recalls. "People talk about the joy of the start-up years. It took fifteen years to work." His Senate plans waited, and waited. Bradley's come-to-Jesus moment happened when he was forty, on a thirteen-hour flight to Vietnam. For the first time in years, Bradley says, he had a day alone to think. He realized he had become older. "I looked older. I was living in D.C., which had no elected senators. I wasn't a Republican anymore. I was never going to be a senator." On the same flight, he decided to buy a magazine. Perhaps his interest in politics could be realized through journalism. "If I couldn't take the course," he thought, "then at least I could audit it."

Back home, he called an investment banker, Rick LePere, a Washington magazine broker, to see if he could buy his favorite magazine, *The New Republic*. Owner Peretz informed LePere that Bar-

bra Streisand had just offered \$25 million, way beyond Bradley's price range. When Times Mirror's Willes decided to sell the *National Journal*, Sullivan contacted LePere about finding a buyer. Bradley paid \$11 million for a 5,000-circulation property that was modestly profitable.

"Times Mirror had been managing it principally on the cost side," Bradley said. "We needed to attract a caliber of talent who would not even consider working with us." Peretz did Bradley the favor of firing Michael Kelly the week Bradley bought the *National Journal*. Kelly agreed, grudgingly, to meet with Bradley. "The look on his face," Bradley said. "It wasn't hostile. But a deeply disturbed look of 'Why am I here?'" After a seven-hour conversation, Kelly knew why he was there, and was hired as a columnist. Eventually, he became editor. Currently, he is the magazine's editorial director. Bradley's financial wherewithal exploded two years later, when he sold half of his business in an IPO that netted him \$142 million. He poured more money into the *National Journal*, and bought *The Atlantic Monthly* from Mort Zuckerman for about \$10 million. Now, with Kelly as its editor, he is shoveling money into the *Atlantic*.

Since September 11, the generalities that govern *The O'Reilly Factor*, *CNN Crossfire*, *The Beltway Boys*, and the rest of the punditocracy have not really penetrated the particular and specific task of reimagining our national security. To prevent another 9/11 requires not just opinions, but ideas. And those ideas, more than ever, have to be born from actual-reported and unflinchingly observed fact, not assumption. The *National Journal's* current editor is Charles Green, who worked at the Knight Ridder Washington bureau for seventeen years. Such declines in quality as that tenure saw, he is not one to mention. His stewardship of a less-than-buzzy weekly is the unspoken rejoinder, not only to his former cost-cutting bosses, but to an industry addicted to double-digit profit margins, and the layoffs, low pay, and hiring freezes that come with them. But Green isn't satisfied. "I don't want people to think we can coast," he says. "We could be better at the quality of our insight and the strength of our analysis. We could be better-written. This is about keeping getting better." ■

Lorraine Adams is a writer in Washington. She won the 1992 Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting.



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SUNDAY MORNING



BY LIZ COX

It's noon on a Thursday morning in July and Richard DiBella, the supervising producer of *Fox News Sunday*, is laboring to lock in guests for the 9 A.M. Sunday show. As DiBella and a colleague work the phones, their list of first-choice guests and topics shifts with each call.

The senator whom DiBella thought he had for a segment on Iraq has suddenly left town to tend to an ill family member. Meanwhile, the White House is making just one official available to the Sunday political talk shows this week: Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge. While domestic security is near the top of DiBella's topic list, if he books Ridge, he'll be sharing him with a competing show, CNN's *Late Edition*. "We all hate sharing guests," DiBella says. Another option is to go with House Majority Leader Dick Armey, who is available for the moment but, DiBella learns, is considering an invitation to do *Meet the Press*. The host of *Fox News Sunday*, Tony Snow, says he will "put in a kind word" by phone as needed, to help the bookings along. On the bright side, ABC is airing the British Open golf tournament in *This Week*'s time slot. That's one less competitor for DiBella to worry about.

Each week, the producers of the five Sunday shows — *Fox News Sunday*, ABC's

This Week, CBS's *Face the Nation*, NBC's *Meet the Press*, and CNN's *Late Edition* — vie for guests who can discuss, in an informed manner, whatever the two or three hot issues happen to be. All of the shows lean toward official government voices, meaning mostly senior members of Congress and the Cabinet, who often appear on more than one Sunday program a week. The producers must perform a delicate dance: if they book guests early in the week, they are less flexible to react to late-breaking news; if they hesitate too long, a rival show will beat them to the booking. The producers for one show might make 100 calls in a week to a list of thirty prospective guests.

Carin Pratt, the executive producer of *Face the Nation*, likens the weekly competition to the pain of childbirth. "If you remembered it, you'd never want to do it again," says Pratt, who has helped book *Face the Nation*'s guests for nearly two decades. Betsy Fischer, the executive producer of *Meet the Press*, seems to take the competition in stride. That may be because she produces the oldest and highest-rated show of the five. *Meet the Press* averaged nearly 4.4 million viewers a week during the first half of 2002, while *Face the Nation* and *This Week* had about 2.9 million each. *Fox News Sunday* averaged 1.3 million viewers, and *Late Edition* had 613,000.

Andrea DeVito, the segment producer for *Fox News Sunday*, compares the process to a weeklong poker game. The players monitor each other's bookings all week, then reveal their hands Friday morning in promos that air on the Washington, D.C.-based radio station, WTOP and later in listings on the *National Journal's* Hotline Web site. "The big thing every Friday is to find out for sure who got who," DeVito says. "It's like, 'Show me your cards.'" On a Friday af-



RUSSELL



SCHIEFFER

ternoon in July, Richard DiBella supplemented *Fox News Sunday*'s hand: following a plunge in the stock market that day, DiBella added Neil Cavuto, *Fox*'s business news commentator, to the lineup, to precede interviews with Tom Ridge, whom *Late Edition* also booked, and Senator Joseph Biden.

If the booking process is a card game, the White House is top dealer. The administration's senior officials are among the most sought-after guests for the Sunday talk circuit. "They'd take Rice, Powell, or Rumsfeld every week if they could," says Adam Levine, an assistant White House press secretary and the person in charge of placing Bush officials on the television programs. "And, of course, the vice president is sort of the Sunday matinee idol because he gives you everything in terms of subject matter." While Levine says he offers top White House officials to the four broadcast networks and CNN on a rotating basis, how strictly he adheres to the rotation is a subject of debate among producers.

"They basically try to go with a rotation," says *Meet the Press*'s Fischer, of the

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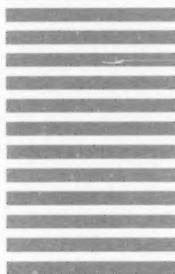
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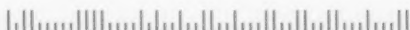
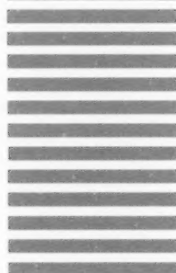
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Bush White House. But also, she says, "I'm sure they think about ratings and where guests will be seen by the most viewers." Tammy Haddad, a veteran television news producer who helped create *Larry King Live*, plays down the notion of a White House rotation system. "They put out who they want, when they want," she says. "Johnny Carson at his height could never get the guests he wanted when he wanted, and it's the same thing on Sunday morning shows." Some producers say the Bush administration keeps a looser rotation than the Clinton White House, and makes its top officials available more often, particularly since September 11. "The Bush administration is more likely to want to put people out, since September, to discuss the war effort than the Clinton administration was willing to put people out to discuss [Clinton's] troubles," says *Face the Nation*'s Pratt.

A rotation system aside, the programs are not all on equal footing in the booking game. The Sunday hosts who also do daily coverage — like *Meet the Press*'s Tim Russert and *Face the Nation*'s Bob Schieffer — probably have a leg up going after certain guests. "Schieffer is the chief Washington correspondent for CBS," says *Fox News Sunday*'s DiBella. "He's working that story every day of the week, so he gets more face time." A show's format can also play in its favor, or not. For example, CNN's *Late Edition*, with its global reach, airs last of the five Sunday programs — from noon to 3 p.m. — giving guests a chance to respond to what happened on earlier shows. "That makes CNN important and probably explains why as a cable network they are included in the rotation with the broadcast networks," Levine says. Playing to that strength, *Late Edition* bills itself as "the last word in Sunday talk." *Face the Nation*, meanwhile, runs just thirty minutes versus the more typical one-hour Sunday show, a fact that can work against it. "If I know there's a show where I can have twenty-two minutes or a show where I get twelve, if a decision has to be made, you pick the twenty-two minutes," Levine says.

Both the dealer and the players have their agendas. While producers and hosts say they strive to knock guests off their talking points, the White House still regards these shows as a prime

SUNDAY ECHOES

Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill did more before noon on July 28 than most of us did all day. Fundamentally more. First, he appeared on three of the five Sunday talk shows. Second, O'Neill drove home his message — that he is focused on the economy's "fundamentals," and that those fundamentals are strong — with drone-like consistency. Twenty-two times, in fact, during the course of *Fox News Sunday*, *Face the Nation*, and *Meet the Press*, the secretary spun some variation on this theme.

"I think my job is to work on the fundamentals, and we're working on the economic fundamentals, which are good, which I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to say several times," O'Neill told Tim Russert, as his *Meet the Press* interview wound down.

"You have," said Russert.

O'Neill, reflexively, had the last word: "The economic fundamentals of our society are good and improving."

At times there is a conveyor-belt quality to the Sunday talk shows — the same guests saying the same, carefully crafted things again and again as they move through the circuit. Indeed, it is more than just repeating an idea; often the exact language is repeated, giving the appearances the air of a stump speech. The shows prefer exclusives, of course, and their journalists prefer open discussions; but both are limited by the availability of relevant guests, competitive pressures to stick to the same handful of hot issues, and the fact that the Bush administration uses the shows to hammer home its message of the day. According to the Hotline's Media Monitor, which lists the guests that are scheduled each week on the Sunday shows, twelve of the eighty-two guests scheduled from June 9 to July 28 were booked for multiple appearances in a single day, and twenty-seven were slated to appear more than one day.

Following are some snippets of this metronomic phenomenon:

JUNE 9: TOM RIDGE EVOLVES

Ridge, the director of homeland security, repeatedly reminded viewers of *Meet the Press*, *Face the Nation*, and *Late Edition* that the new department that Congress has yet to create is "an evolutionary process," focused on securing "the homeland."

"But it's an evolutionary process. It began back in May." (*Late Edition*)

"But there's an evolutionary process here that as a result of which comes the centerpiece." (*Meet the Press*)

"Well, first of all, this has been an evolutionary process, Bob." (*Face the Nation*)

JUNE 9: BOB GRAHAM'S VISION

Graham, chairman of the Senate's Select Intelligence Committee, beat the drum for having "one set of human eyes" on intelligence data.

"Information was collected by different intelligence agencies but never got before one set of human eyes so that the jigsaw puzzle could begin to take some form." (*Late Edition*)

"I think the president has taken a step in the right direction by setting up this single analytical agency so that one set of human eyes will be looking at all the information which comes in." (*Face the Nation*)

JUNE 30: POWELL'S DIRECTION

Referring to Yasir Arafat, Secretary of State Colin Powell used the word "direction" eleven times on *This Week* and *Face the Nation*, coupled with the words "correct," "new," or "right."

"He [Arafat] does not use his moral authority to call for new directions, to tell the people that the direction in which they are going with terror and violence is wrong." (*This Week*)

"And I said to him [Arafat], when this siege is over you have got to move in a new direction or we will not be able to continue to try to help you. And frankly, he has not moved in that new direction." (*Face the Nation*)

JUNE 30: RICE'S PROGRESS

Dovetailing with Powell's message, Condoleezza Rice, the national security adviser, expressed her "forward" thinking fourteen times while discussing Palestinian leadership on *Meet the Press* and *Late Edition*.

"We're not going to move forward until we can get new leadership — through democratic means, elections — to move forward." (*Late Edition*)

"But if we're going to move forward, we have to have a new dynamic, and we believe that begins with reform of Palestinian institutions, it begins with the emergence of new leadership, but that is by no means the end." (*Meet the Press*)

— Laura Neilson is an intern at CJR.

SUNDAY MORNING continued on p34

place to spread its message. "The Sunday show is our opportunity to get beyond the sort of one-liner that the press is looking for and really explain and fully articulate our positions and policies," Levine says. For the Sunday shows, generating news is a priority, which, in turn, is good for ratings and good for attracting future high-quality guests. "How much news you make is kind of like the holy grail for Sunday morning political shows," says Marty Ryan, the executive producer of *Fox News Sunday*. The Sunday programs make headlines at a volume that the nightly news and weekday morning news shows can't match. *Fox News Sunday* keeps a chart of the stories it and its competitors spawn, and all five shows are routinely referenced in top newspapers Monday morning.

To make news, of course, it is helpful to book top newsmakers. That is part of

the reason the Sunday shows almost have the feel of a branch of government. Some producers say that this has been an unusual year, that they have booked the White House principals and congressional leaders more frequently since September 11. Yet even in the first half of 2001, Sunday morning sometimes seemed reserved for official Washington talking to itself, with the same Cabinet officials and members of Congress making the rounds. *Meet the Press's* Betsy Fischer says, "We're very much at the mercy of the news and we're always looking for guests in positions to influence policy. Sometimes it is a limited pool of guests. If there's an issue we can expand outside the typical people, we certainly try to expand on it." As examples, Fischer points to a program in March devoted to the Russian defense minister, and one in June on which the Reverend Donald Cozzens, the author of *The Changing Face of the Priesthood*, was a guest.

The fierce competition for the official few often leads to guests' doing more than one program on a given Sunday, which the White House prefers. While producers grumble that it can be more difficult to get the coveted exclusive interview from the Bush administration, Levine's view is that if he is going to ask someone to give up part of his or her Sunday, he gets more mileage by placing that person on multiple shows. "There are very few scenarios where exclusivity suits the president's purposes," Levine says. "It serves the networks' purposes." On this point, the dealer usually wins. It is still unusual, however, for a guest to do all five shows on a single Sunday — what producers call doing "a full Ginsburg" in honor of William Ginsburg, Monica Lewinsky's lawyer and the first guest to hit all of the shows in one day. ■

Liz Cox is an assistant editor at CJR.

EVOLVING ATTITUDES ABOUT REVOLVING DOORS

When George Stephanopoulos replaced Sam Donaldson and Cokie Roberts on ABC News's *This Week*, it left only two career journalists, CBS's Bob Schieffer and CNN's Wolf Blitzer, as hosts of the five Sunday political talk shows. The rest have some politics in their past: Tim Russert counseled former U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan and former New York Governor Mario Cuomo before taking a job with NBC, and Tony Snow was chief speechwriter for the first President Bush before landing at *Fox News Sunday*. Stephanopoulos, of course, was part of President Clinton's inner circle as a senior adviser before going to ABC News when Clinton began his second term in office.

There is nothing new about political operatives becoming journalists, although there may be a change in the way we think about the phenomenon. When people like William Safire and David Gergen and others went through the revolving door, a fair amount of controversy followed them, as reporters and editors worried about possible bias and conflicts. But journalists we asked about the Stephanopoulos switch, by and large, didn't see a problem.

Alex Jones, Director of Harvard's Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy: "It's not new. It's very much like academia and government. It really depends on the person. You can't lay down rules." Stephanopoulos deserves the same chance that others have been given, Jones adds. He remembers the outrage when former Nixon speechwriter William Safire was named a *New York Times* columnist: "Like Safire, Stephanopoulos has been given a very prominent forum, but unlike Safire, he is expected to preside over a discussion. George Stephanopoulos will have to persuade people of his objectivity, but I disagree with those who wring their hands and say you should never be allowed to be in journalism if you've been in government."

David Shaw, a media columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*: "I'm made uneasy by it. On the other hand, I don't like rigid, inflexible rules. George is an exception. On the occasions that I've watched, I've found him to be lucid and intelligent."

Richard Wald, the Fred Friendly Professor of Journalism at Columbia University and a part-time ABC consultant, says revolving door criticism is useful. "I approve of this criticism, but it just doesn't cut it in George's case." Wald, a former president of NBC News, acknowledges that Stephanopoulos was a master of spin. But he is irritated by the idea of barring certain people from journalism. Unless you want the trade to become licensed, he says, it doesn't matter where you

came from. "If you find a nuclear physicist who can write English and you hire him as a science writer, you're ahead of the game. If you can find a doctor who can write English and writes about medicine, you're ahead of the game. Why should it be different for politics? You have to show you're serving the audience, not the politicians. So when you go through the revolving door, 180 degrees is fine, but 360 degrees isn't."

Tom Goldstein, the former Columbia Journalism School dean, who spent two years as the press secretary for New York Mayor Ed Koch: "Stephanopoulos served his apprenticeship at a very high level. He'll be scrutinized and that will be a corrective in itself. The tradition has been that you're generally given one pass through the revolving door. My general view is that the tent of journalism is a big one. I learned an extraordinary amount in those two years, which has been very useful to me. I never went back. I'm sure there are still some hard-liners who wouldn't approve. I wouldn't have covered city hall right after leaving. But if you're only seeing the world from the outside, you do miss something. People with first-hand experience can be quite useful."

—Adeel Hassan is an assistant editor at CJR.



Johnny can't read, sit still, or stop hitting the neighbor's kid.

Why?



Toxic chemicals can cause learning disabilities.

We are physicians and scientists. We are deeply troubled that an estimated twelve million American kids suffer from developmental, learning, or behavioral disabilities. Attention deficit disorder affects three to six percent of our schoolchildren.

These disabilities are caused by a complex interplay of genetic, environmental, and social factors. Evidence reviewed by the National Academy of Sciences indicates that toxic chemicals contribute to these problems. Environmental factors take on great importance because they can be prevented.

What We Know

Studies show that lead, mercury, industrial chemicals, and certain pesticides cross the placenta and enter the brain of the developing fetus where they can cause learning and behavioral disabilities. This is true in young animals – and in young children.

Exposures to organophosphate pesticides during pregnancy can result in abnormally

low brain weight and developmental impairment in offspring. A Duke University study conducted on rodents found that hyper-activity and brain cell death can be caused by small exposures to the widely used organophosphate pesticide Dursban. That study led to the ban on the production and sale of Dursban. But similar-acting pesticides are still on the market.

A University of Arizona study found that children exposed to a combination of pesticides before birth and through breast milk exhibited less stamina, and poorer memory and coordination, than other kids.

Mercury released by coal-fired power plants contaminates waterways and accumulates in fish. Many thousands of the pregnant women in America who eat fish consume enough mercury to potentially harm their children's neurological development. Some states warn that children should not eat more than a can of tuna per week; based on EPA guidelines, a twenty-pound child may exceed a level considered safe for the most sensitive populations with just 1.3 ounces.

Though PCBs have been banned, residual PCBs still do much damage. Children whose mothers ate Great Lakes fish

contaminated with PCBs showed lowered IQs and shortened attention spans. And these effects on intelligence and behavior have been shown to persist throughout childhood. A Dutch study confirmed that increased maternal levels of PCBs can impair cognition in infants. Young monkeys exposed to PCBs at low levels show learning disabilities and hyperactivity.

What We Can Do

There is much that parents can do to protect their children, beginning with the elimination of many pesticides both outside and in the home. And the choice of a wise diet. There are more suggestions on our website, www.childenvironment.org.

But we must do more. We have enough scientific evidence to phase out those chemicals known to harm children's behavior and development. If a medicine caused these problems in kids, we'd ban it.

We don't allow food or drugs to be sold before being shown to be safe. Yet there are thousands of chemicals on the market that affect human biology and have never been tested. Most importantly, we must demand that new chemicals be tested for safety before being allowed on the market. We do not have a system that does that now.

A summary of the supporting scientific evidence, and a list of scientific endorsers, can be found at www.childenvironment.org.



Center for
Children's Health
and the
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MOUNT SINAI
SCHOOL OF
MEDICINE



More kids are getting brain cancer. Why?

Toxic chemicals appear linked to rising rates of some cancers.

As scientists and physicians, we've seen a drop in the death rates of many adult and childhood cancers because of earlier detection and better treatment. But we are also seeing a disturbing rise in the reported *incidence* of cancer among young children and adolescents, especially brain cancer, testicular cancer, and acute lymphocytic leukemia. In fact, after injuries and violence, cancer is the leading cause of death in our children.

The increase in childhood cancers may be explained in part by better detection or better access to medical care. But evidence suggests the rise in these childhood cancers, as well as in cancers like non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and multiple myeloma among adults, may also be partially explained by exposure to chemicals in the environment, chemicals found in many products, from paints and pesticides to dark-colored hair dyes.

What We Know

Pound for pound, kids are exposed to more toxic chemicals in food, air, and water than adults, because children breathe twice as

much air, eat three to four times more food, and drink as much as two to seven times more water. Recent epidemiologic studies have shown that as children's exposures to home and garden pesticides increase, so does their risk of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, brain cancer, and leukemia. Yet, right now, you can go to your hardware store and buy lawn pesticides, paint thinner and weed killers, all containing toxic chemicals linked to these diseases.

In both children and adults, the incidence rate for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma has increased thirty percent since 1950. The disease has been linked to industrial chemicals, chemicals found in agricultural, home, and garden pesticides, as well as dark hair dyes.

Studies have shown that Vietnam veterans and chemical workers exposed to Agent Orange, a phenoxy herbicide, are especially at risk for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. American farmers who use phenoxy herbicides have an increased risk of the cancer. A Swedish study showed that among the general population, the risk of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma rises with increased exposure to these herbicides. And, a study in Southern California found that children of parents who use home pesticides have seven times the risk of non-Hodgkin's

lymphoma. Multiple myeloma, a bone marrow cancer, is also associated with toxic chemicals. Its incidence has tripled since 1950. Farmers are especially at risk: a recent analysis of thirty-two studies worldwide showed "consistent, positive findings" of an association between farming and multiple myeloma.

What We Can Do

There is much that parents can do to protect their children from carcinogenic chemicals, beginning with the elimination of many pesticides both outside and in the home. And, of course, the cessation of smoking. There are more suggestions on our website, www.childenvironment.org.

But more needs to be done. As a society, we've done much to protect people, especially children, from the toxic chemicals in cigarettes. But too many toxic chemicals are being marketed without adequate testing. We should demand that new chemicals undergo the same rigorous testing as medicines before being allowed on the market. And we should phase out those chemicals linked with a wide range of health problems from neurological impairment to cancer in children.

A summary of the supporting scientific evidence, and a list of scientific endorsers, can be found at www.childenvironment.org.



MOUNT SINAI
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**Center for
Children's Health
and the
Environment**

Our most precious natural resource is being threatened. Why?



Toxic chemicals are being passed on to infants in breast milk.

We've never created a product with the effectiveness of breast milk. Breast milk is a unique source of nourishment and protection against disease. But the chemical industry has created a myriad of toxic synthetic chemicals that ultimately collect in breast milk and are passed to infants. Some of these chemicals can pose risks to the health and neurological development of our children.

As pediatricians and scientists, we are convinced that breast milk is still the best choice for mother and child. However, we see disturbing evidence that in the future, breast milk may not be as effective as it once was in guarding children against disease. Unless classes of chemicals that accumulate in breast milk are phased out, we believe the health risks to our children could increase.

What We Know

From DDT's first appearance in the 1950s to PCBs in the 1960s to pesticides on sale today, persistent organic chemicals find

their way into the fatty tissue of women's breasts. And they stay there for years until passed to infants during breast-feeding.

Today's breast milk still contains toxic remnants of DDT, passed from grandmother to mother to child. Though DDT has been banned, today's persistent organic pollutants accumulate in a similar way. A breast-fed infant can absorb in one year thirty to ninety percent of the maximum recommended lifetime dose of dioxin, a chemical known to be both hormonally-active and carcinogenic. Other toxic chemicals – heptachlor, chlordane, mirex, dieldrin, aldrin, benzene, and chloroform – are also finding their way into breast milk. So are perchloroethylene, the main chemical used to dry clean clothes, and polybrominated flame retardants. We know that during gestation and in the early months after birth, an infant's brain is particularly susceptible to harm from toxic chemicals. We don't know what the minimum safe levels of exposure are. It may be that no exposure is safe.

Although there is only limited research on how chemicals in breast milk affect children, the available facts are disturbing. A North Carolina study of 800 nursing

mothers showed that as PCB levels in breast milk increase, children have poorer motor coordination. Even more disturbing, several studies in the Netherlands show that as levels of PCBs in breast milk increased, infants had more immune impairment, evidence that toxic pollutants in breast milk can negate the milk's immunologic benefits.

There is some good news as well: a Swedish study showed that as government efforts severely limited maternal exposure to PCBs and other toxic chemicals, the levels of these chemicals in breast milk decreased.

What We Can Do

Pregnant women and those who are nursing should limit their exposure to pesticides, lead, and mercury. Fish species known to be contaminated by mercury and PCBs should be avoided. Dry cleaning should be aired out before it is brought into the house. Nursing mothers should choose a wise diet. There are more suggestions on our website.

But more needs to be done. We must phase out chemicals that pose a risk to our health, especially to our children's health, beginning with the toxic chemicals which have been detected in breast milk. We should demand that new chemicals undergo the same rigorous testing as medicines before allowed on the market. There can be no more important public health mission than ensuring the safety of mother's milk.

A summary of the supporting scientific evidence, and a list of scientific endorsers, can be found at www.childenvironment.org.



**Center for
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MOUNT SINAI
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Pesticides could become the ultimate male contraceptive. Why?

Sperm defects, sex reversals and other abnormalities.

Something is happening to the reproductive system of the males of many species. It's happening to male birds of prey around the Great Lakes and male alligators in Florida. To male harbor seals in the Netherlands and male polar bears in the Arctic. And to boys and men throughout the industrialized world.

Scientists have amassed a great deal of evidence linking reproductive system abnormalities, reduced sperm motility, sperm defects, sex reversals and altered sex ratios with exposure to an array of synthetic chemicals known as endocrine disruptors. These include pesticides and certain industrial chemicals like dioxin, PCBs, and phthalates, as well as arsenic, lead, and mercury. Some of these chemicals "mimic" estrogen; others interfere with testosterone and some block the thyroid function.

As physicians and scientists, we are concerned that despite the growing scientific evidence, these chemicals are still on the market.

What We Know

Medical studies have indicated that the sperm counts of males in America and Europe have decreased over the last fifty years. Despite gaps in the data, sperm counts have clearly declined in many places and are inexplicably low in others. The most sophisticated analysis, published in *Environmental Health Perspectives*, the journal of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, indicates the decline may be as great as forty percent.

We know that some chemical workers exposed to endocrine-disrupting pesticides have been made temporarily, and in some cases, permanently sterile.

Dioxin, produced in the incineration of trash containing polyvinyl chloride plastic and chlorine-treated paper, has been shown to be responsible for birth defects and other reproductive problems in birds of prey around the Great Lakes. Dioxin is extremely toxic, and exposure as low as 25 parts per trillion causes feminizing effects in animals. A dioxin accident in Seveso, Italy, was followed by a decrease in the number of boys being born. The ratio of boys to girls is also decreasing in the U.S., Canada, and Denmark. A Danish study found a link between endocrine disruptors and the increasing incidence of undescended testicles in boys.

Endocrine disruptors affect women as well. Several animal studies link small exposures to dioxin with endometriosis.

What We Can Do

Parents should limit their children's exposure to pesticides, both outside and in the home. Organically produced foods should be

purchased whenever possible. And care should be taken to see that no fish from contaminated waters are consumed. There are more suggestions on our website, www.childenvironment.org.

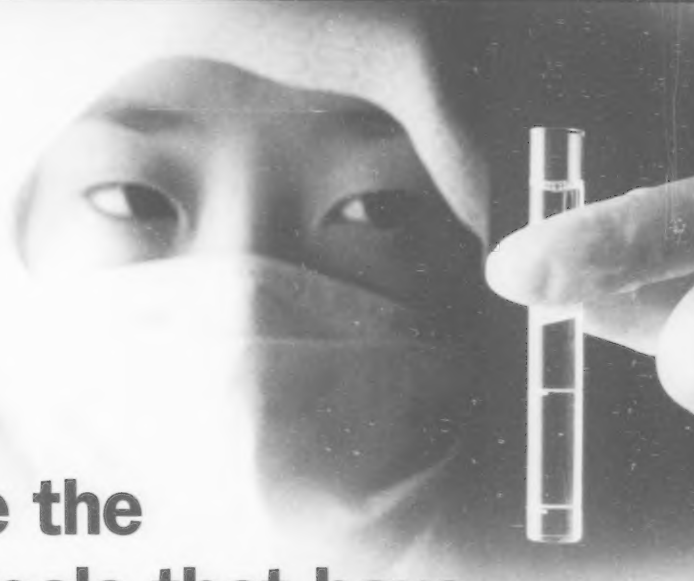
But we must do more. Though not the sole cause, it's clear that exposures to endocrine disruptors can be contributors to reproductive problems in both animals and humans. Some synthetic chemicals already shown to adversely affect animals and humans are still being sold today. And other chemicals in the same chemical families have not been tested. Wouldn't we all be better off if chemicals had to be tested for safety before they were put on the market? Certainly males would be better off.

A summary of the supporting scientific evidence, and a list of scientific endorsers, can be found at www.childenvironment.org.



**Center for
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Medicines are the only chemicals that have to be proven safe. Why?

A double standard threatens our health.

Before a chemical can be marketed as a drug, it must go through extensive testing, on animals and humans. It must pass a series of safety tests before it can be sold. There's a well-established FDA process in place if a drug manufacturer wants to sell a hormonal medication like a birth control pill, or post-menopausal hormone replacement therapy.

But if a company wants to sell an industrial chemical that may bind to the same cells as these hormonal medications and acts identically or very similarly – there is no regulatory agency or governmental oversight to ensure the product is safe. Unlike chemicals sold as medicine, industrial and commercial chemicals are presumed safe until proven hazardous.

What We Know

Hundreds of synthetic chemicals that affect human biology, including known carcinogens, chemicals that cause birth defects, and chemicals that can disrupt the endocrine system are being sold and widely

dispersed today. These toxics can be found in everything from pesticides, paints and paint thinners, to industrial detergents and hair dyes. You know them as PCBs and phthalates and dioxin. Many accumulate over time. These chemicals now permeate our water, soil and food. You can find them in the tissue of humans in every area of the world. And you will likely find them in your body and in your children's bodies.

Some endocrine disrupting chemicals mimic the female sex hormone estrogen; others block testosterone; some interfere with the thyroid function. In the animal world, scientists have linked exposure to these chemicals with reproductive abnormalities including feminization of males, hermaphroditism, birth defects, and high infant death rates.

Toxic chemicals are threatening the future effectiveness of human breast milk. Breast milk now contains small but biologically active amounts of scores of industrial chemicals. Some of these chemicals are known to cause neurological impairment in the very young.

Some exposure to certain chemicals is now associated with an increase in the incidence of some cancers among children and of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and multiple myeloma in adults.

What We Can Do

There is much that parents can do to protect their children against endocrine disrupting chemicals, beginning with the elimination of many pesticides both outside and in the home. Organic foods should be purchased wherever possible. There are more suggestions on our website.

But more needs to be done. Like medicines, industrial chemicals that affect human biology must be tested and regulated. We have good experience when we do regulate chemicals. Removing lead from gasoline resulted in a 90% reduction in lead poisoning. But most of the chemicals being sold today have never been fully tested for safety. We need to phase out those that are unsafe. And we must move to a regulatory system that fully tests all chemicals, no matter how they are to be used, before they are sold.

A summary of the supporting scientific evidence, and a list of scientific endorsers, can be found at www.childenvironment.org.



MOUNT SINAI
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Chemicals combine in our bodies, but are rarely tested that way.

Why?



Multiple exposures pose unknown risks.

A good pharmacist will alert you that a newly-prescribed medicine may adversely interact with some other medicine you're already taking. That is, two medications that are individually benign can cause problems in combination. Careful studies have been undertaken to identify those drug interactions.

But when it comes to toxic chemicals in everyday products, there is surprisingly little information available about how they behave in combination. How, for example, are our bodies affected when the chemicals in paint thinners interact with those in dark hair dyes, or when we are exposed to one pesticide on a fruit, and another from our neighbor's lawn?

What We Know

Here is an analogy: Compared with non-smokers, cigarette smokers have ten times the risk of contracting lung cancer. We also know that workers exposed to asbestos have five times the lung cancer risk compared with those never exposed. You might think, therefore, that smokers

exposed to asbestos would have 15 times the risk of getting lung cancer. In fact, they face 55 times the risk. A powerful interaction.

We know that the tissue of nearly every human on earth contains detectable levels of a range of chemicals called persistent organic pollutants or POPs. We find POPs in pesticides, industrial chemicals, indeed in a broad range of products introduced over the past sixty years. We know that occupational exposure to PCBs, dioxin, and other POPs has been linked to several cancers and to a broad range of reproductive problems, including birth defects in offspring. Clinical and epidemiological studies suggest that non-occupational exposures to POPs at much lower levels may also cause significant harm, especially to developing fetal organs. And the little we know of exposure to a multiplicity of these chemicals should cause concern.

Dutch scientists have documented that when PCBs, at a non-toxic level, are mixed with dioxin, at a level that produced only minor liver damage, the combination produced 400 times the damage of the dioxin alone.

A study at Tufts University tested the effects of 10 pesticides which mimicked estrogen in the body. At low levels, none of the pesticides alone had an effect on human tissue. But in various combinations, there was a strong estrogen-mimicking effect... even at low levels.

In a study at the University of Wisconsin, mice showed no effect when exposed to atrazine or aldicarb, two pesticides commonly found in drinking water in the Midwest. When mice were exposed to both chemicals, as humans often are, the combination produced immune system impairment.

What We Can Do

Parents should limit their children's exposure to pesticides, both in and outside the home. Organically produced foods should be purchased whenever possible. The use of paints, solvents, and cleaning products containing toxic and volatile chemicals should be limited. There are more suggestions on our website.

But we must do more. Of the thousands of synthetic chemicals on the market, relatively few have been tested for safety. And even fewer have been tested in combination with other chemicals. For our health, for our children's health, such testing should be in place for all chemicals.

A summary of the supporting scientific evidence, and a list of scientific endorsers, can be found at www.childenvironment.org.



MOUNT SINAI
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**Center for
Children's Health
and the
Environment**

She's the test subject for thousands of toxic chemicals. Why?

Industry falsely discredits current animal testing.

In previous ads in this series, we physicians and scientists have presented a body of scientific evidence linking toxic chemicals to a wide range of health problems in humans, from learning disabilities and brain injury in children to certain cancers in both children and adults.

We have emphasized that these health problems are preventable. We have stressed that thorough pre-market testing of chemicals is a critical component of disease prevention.

There is a well-established and respected FDA approval process that a company must follow before it can market a chemical as a medicine. That process includes testing at various doses on animals. Only if the medicine is shown to be safe for animals is it approved for tests on humans.

America's pharmaceutical industry acknowledges, indeed embraces, these animal testing regimes for medicines. At the same time, however, certain segments of the chemical industry are making false claims about similar pre-market testing for chemicals other than medications.

They claim that testing has little value "because at a high enough dose all chemicals cause cancer." That's not true. The National Cancer Institute and the National Toxicology Program find that only 5-10% of commercial chemicals cause cancer at any dose. The industry also claims that animal testing bears little connection to human risk. That's not true either – the Human Genome Project has shown that laboratory animals and humans have very great genetic similarity and share very similar endocrine, immune and nervous systems.

The industry claims that testing has little value unless it involves tens of thousands of animals at low dose levels. Not true – the National Toxicology Program has developed sophisticated technologies for testing chemicals at a range of doses in small numbers of animals and then predicting human risk.

Inaccurate and false as all these claims are, they have found a certain audience in government and the press. These claims have paralyzed the regulatory process. They are preventing whole classes of chemicals from being properly tested. And that puts everybody's health at risk, especially the health of our children.

What We Know

- Every known human carcinogen causes cancer in animals.
- Every chemical known to cause brain damage in humans causes damage to the brain and nervous system in animals.
- Every chemical known to interfere with reproductive function in humans interferes with reproduction in animals.
- Almost every known cause of birth defects in humans also causes birth defects in animals.

– And, with few exceptions, when toxic chemicals harm animals, they almost always cause similar harm in humans.

What We Can Do

Parents should limit their children's exposure to synthetic chemicals. They should minimize use of pesticides outside and inside the house. They should choose safe cleaning products. Wherever possible, they should purchase organically produced food. Fish from contaminated waters should be avoided. There are more suggestions at www.childenvironment.org.

We must do more. The evidence is incontrovertible. We must move quickly to phase out those toxic chemicals that are known to pose a danger to human health. And we must institute a system of regulation that tests new synthetic chemicals and proves them safe before they are allowed to be sold, before our children are exposed. Isn't that the system you thought we already had?



**Center for
Children's Health
and the
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A Message From 37 of America's Leading Physicians and Pediatric Researchers

The seven preceding advertisements appeared this summer in the New York Times as part of a public education campaign, sponsored by the Center for Children's Health and the Environment of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. They have been endorsed by the following prominent doctors and scientists.

Visit our website at www.childenvironment.org where background science papers are available, expanding on and further documenting the assertions in each of these ads.



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**Center for
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purposes only.*

MONEY TALKS: JOURNALISTS ON THE CIRCUIT

Giving speeches can be a lucrative sideline for well-known journalists. Many Washington journalists, with their combination of political expertise and TV exposure, can and often do make the most money. That money has raised some questions.

In the early 1990s, ABC's Sam Donaldson received a reported \$30,000 honorarium for speaking to an insurance group that was later investigated by his newsmagazine. That incident helped make journalists' speechmaking a hot topic — even though the TV segment was critical of the group and payment to Donaldson was disclosed on-air. Adding to the controversy was ABC's Cokie Roberts's reported \$20,000 honorarium for a speech — in the middle of the health care reform debates — to the Group Health Association of America (though she decided to give the money to charity). Many news organizations have since adopted or strengthened policies forbidding journalists to receive payment for speeches to any group they cover. Some, including ABC, prohibit paid speeches to any for-profit group.

Nonetheless, some journalists — particularly television pundits — still receive honorariums from groups that could have an interest in the issues they cover. Tucker Carlson, co-host of CNN's *Crossfire*, argues that, as a pundit, different standards apply to him. "I am an opinion journalist," he says, "I'm not impartial. I'm quite partial. It is hard to see how I would have a conflict of interest."

Jim Warren, deputy managing editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, who says he has never accepted money for a speech, disagrees. Pundits should be held to standards at least as high — if not higher — than reporters because they have "greater editorial power" and freedom.

All the journalists we spoke with say their work has never been influenced by paid speeches. NPR's Nina Totenberg asks: "Could any reputable journalist be influenced by a speech fee? No. Money is cheap compared to your reputation."

CJR asked some of Washington's high-profile reporters and commentators about speech-making. Here are some of their responses.

—Seth Stephens is an intern at CJR.

JOURNALIST	PRICE PER SPEECH SPEECHES PER YEAR	GIVES PAID SPEECHES TO ...	SOME GROUPS THEY WILL NOT GIVE PAID SPEECHES TO ...
DAVID BRODER political columnist, <i>The Washington Post</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to \$10,000, • About 12 	Colleges/ civic groups	Partisan political groups/ lobbying interests
TUCKER CARLSON co-host, CNN's <i>Crossfire</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Varies;" Washington Speakers Bureau reports \$10,001-\$15,000 • "Some" 	Trade groups	National Abortion Rights Action League "because they are evil"
ELEANOR CLIFT contributing editor, <i>Newsweek</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5,000-\$10,000 • 8-10 	Civic groups/ trade groups	Groups that she directly covers
SAM DONALDSON former co-anchor, <i>This Week</i> , ABC; host, <i>The Sam Donaldson Live in America Show</i> , ABC radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would not disclose; International Speakers Bureau reports \$30,001-\$50,000 • Fewer than 10 	Colleges/ civic groups	Nonprofit health groups/ groups that ABC does not permit, including for-profit organizations
HOWARD FINEMAN chief political correspondent, <i>Newsweek</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would not disclose 	Colleges/civic groups/ trade groups	Political party-affiliated groups
MORTON KONDRACK co-host, <i>The Beltway Boys</i> , Fox News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5,000-\$10,000 • About 20 	Trade groups	"A terrorist group or a criminal enterprise or a group that is ideologically off the map"
ANDREA MITCHELL chief foreign affairs correspondent, NBC News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would not disclose • 6-7 	Colleges/nonprofit groups/charities	Groups that lobby such as trade groups/ for-profit organizations (NBC policy)
CLARENCE PAGE nationally syndicated columnist, <i>Chicago Tribune</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About \$10,000 • Used to be about 12; fewer since September 11 because demand is for foreign affairs experts. 	Colleges/civic groups	Organizations that <i>Chicago Tribune</i> does not permit (organizations lobbying the government)
TONY SNOW host, <i>Fox News Sunday</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to \$20,000 • Low 20s; gave 80 in 1993 	Colleges/trade groups/ think tanks	Groups with political agendas
NINA TOTENBERG legal affairs correspondent, National Public Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would not disclose; Kepler Assoc. reports \$10,001-\$20,000 • 5-10 	Colleges/legal groups/ endowed lecture series	Groups that she covers/groups with cases before the Supreme Court
MARGARET WARNER senior correspondent, <i>The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer</i> , PBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would not disclose • 1 or fewer 	Colleges/nonprofit groups	Groups with lobbying offices in Washington/ trade groups/private companies (NewsHour policy)

'Cutting Furthest from the Heart'



BY STEVE PIACENTE

They buried the lead in a grilled tuna sandwich. First there was chitchat about semi-pro basketball, and the quirky state congressional delegation. It wasn't until the end of the meal that they got to the news. "The real reason you're here," the managing editor said after the waitress brought coffee, "is we've decided to close the Washington bureau."

I glanced from the managing editor to the man at my left, my city editor for more than a decade. One of them was sure to smile, confirming the joke. After all, I was in Charleston to discuss a story in progress, not the prospect of a disappearing job. No one smiled.

The Charleston, South Carolina, *Post and Courier* has had Washington correspondents since 1977, well before I took over in 1989. Would one of the state's top three papers actually abandon Washington in ninety-nine-year-old Strom Thurmond's last year as a senator? They said something about "cutting furthest from the heart," and, "Nothing to do with you, Steve, it's the economy."

Over the last decade or so, mostly in the name of saving money (but for other reasons, too) a number of regional papers from around the country have shuttered their D.C. bureaus or cut bureau staff. Definitive numbers are elusive, but anecdotal evidence is abundant. In the last five years alone the Colorado Springs *Gazette*, the Lexington *Herald-Leader*, the Akron, Ohio, *Beacon Journal*, and the Greenville (South Carolina) *News* have abandoned the Beltway; the Huntsville (Alabama) *Times* chose not to replace its D.C. reporter who left to start a family; the

Columbus, Georgia, *Ledger-Enquirer* cut its D.C. reporter — which it had shared with another paper — and created a new position back home; in 1990, *The Florida Times-Union* in Jacksonville vacated D.C. to save money, then briefly returned last year only to have its lone Washington reporter quit for a better-paying job. Lee Davidson, the capital correspondent for the *Deseret News* in Salt Lake City for fifteen years, says when he began, five other Utah newspapers had reporters in D.C. Until recently, he was the only one left. (The Gannett-owned *St. George Spectrum* now shares a Washington reporter with papers in Honolulu and Guam, and *The Salt Lake Tribune* will soon add a D.C. reporter.)

So what, right? With all the wire coverage of the nation's capital, what is really lost when these small bureaus close?

This turns out to be a matter of some debate. Diane McFarlin, publisher of the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* and current president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, considers regional reporting from Washington a staple of local coverage. A community correspondent, she says, "will ferret out actions or trends that might not have broad enough implications to interest the national press corps, but that are especially relevant to readers back home."

McFarlin, though, wasn't able to spare her D.C. bureau from the budget ax. The New York Times Regional Newspaper Group, which owns McFarlin's paper, recently dropped both its Washington reporters.

Tim McGuire, McFarlin's predecessor at ASNE and a former editor of the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, says his newspaper maintain its three-person Washington bureau despite budget pressure. This investment pays off, McGuire says, both in the quality of day-to-day coverage and when a big story — like September 11 — breaks. The paper's D.C. reporters broke several stories on the investigation of the alleged terrorist Zacarias Mousaoui, including pieces on the warnings that flight school officials in Minnesota sent to the FBI.

Not everyone, though, shares the con-

viction that a D.C. bureau makes sense for regional papers. Amanda Bennett, editor of the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, says that too often Washington jobs are filled with "high-end" reporters doing routine stories.

Philip Meyer, a journalism professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a D.C. correspondent for the *Beacon Journal* in the 1960s, says that today's communication technology reduces the need for Washington bureaus. "With e-mails, handouts, and committee testimony on the Internet, plus cheap long-distance calls, having face time with the congressman and staff is less important."

True enough, but the *Post and Courier* minus a Washington reporter would never have had hundreds of customized D.C. stories it sent me there to find. Like the one on how Lindsey Graham, one of South Carolina's congressmen, used the Clinton impeachment trial to build himself into Strom Thurmond's heir apparent; or the one about the young widow of a Charleston-based Air Force pilot killed in a mid-air collision who came to D.C. and didn't leave until Congress made the military build safer cargo jets.

Should Thurmond, the nation's oldest and longest-serving senator, keel over today while reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, *Post and Courier* readers would get either a second-hand story pieced together from home, or wire reports.

Abandoning the nation's capital to the competition, incidentally, saves the *Post and Courier* a reporter's salary, a phone bill, and access to a D.C. daybook service — together about \$85,000.

"It was purely economics," says Larry Tarleton, the *Post and Courier's* publisher, of the decision to close the bureau. "The Thurmond situation made the decision more difficult. I'm sure we're missing some updates and anecdotes on his condition."

And a whole lot more. ■

After twenty-five years as a reporter, Steve Piacente is now a speechwriter for Stephen A. Perry, head of the U.S. General Services Administration.



The 9/11 Effect Is Starting to Fade

BY ANDREW KOHUT

The September 11 terrorist attacks revived Washington's stock with the American public and also the importance of Washington journalism. But the public is only lukewarm about the way the Washington media do their job. And it has reservations about the revolving door between the political establishment and journalism inside the Beltway, as well as the trend toward opinionated cable news anchors.

To many Americans in the late 1990s the national government, if not the nation-state itself, appeared irrelevant or floundering. A seeming absence of an overseas threat, a surging stock market driven by the emergence of a global Internet, and a shift of power to the states lessened the importance of what was happening in Washington. The September 11 attacks diminished, if not overshadowed, these trends, and rejuvenated interest in what happens in the nation's capital.

Not all Washington news has experienced such a dramatic lift. But there is somewhat more interest in Washington and national news this year than in previous years, especially among well-educated groups and dedicated news consumers.

In Pew's biennial news survey this year, 53 percent of respondents say they follow national news regularly, not just "when something important or interesting is happening." Though hardly a sea change, this is an improvement on the 48 percent who said this in the 2000 survey. During the same period, public interest in international news also showed a small increase, but most Americans continue to pay attention to international news only when something important is happening. Heavy news consumers, such as college graduates, expressed significantly more interest than they did two years ago in national and international news.

While interest is up, a sizable minority of the public is less than enthusiastic about the *quality* of Washington news, and express strong reservations about some of the ways in which news report-

ing is changing. Nearly eight in ten (77 percent) give the news media an excellent or good rating for its coverage of the attacks and the war on terrorism. The ratings for national and international news, however, are not as favorable — 65 percent and 63 percent, respectively. Fully one in three in Pew's most recent survey gave news organizations negative ratings for their coverage of national and international stories.

The ratings go even lower when respondents are asked about the meat-and-potatoes coverage provided by Washington's news bureaus. Just 56 percent give the press good marks for its coverage of national politics and the fed-

The public . . . is uneasy about the cross-pollination between the media and the political community

eral government, and 42 percent are critical of that coverage. The national media's only consolation in these results is that Pew's poll found the public giving even lower ratings to coverage of state politics and state government — 46 percent positive vs. 49 percent negative.

With people as critical as ever of the accuracy and professionalism of the press, the Pew survey found large segments of the public uneasy about the cross-pollination between the media and the political community. Just 44 percent approve of reporters and other news people having backgrounds as political advisers and consultants, while 42 percent disapprove. Notably, this trend comes in for more criticism among those who follow national news very closely than with those who do not. People who are generally critical of the media's Washington coverage are more uneasy about the "re-

volving door" and, most tellingly, those who view the media as not so professional are much more condemning of this practice than those who give the press high marks for professionalism (53 percent to 36 percent).

Americans are also divided about the trend toward opinionated cable news anchors. Half believe it is a good thing that hosts of cable news programs express strong opinions about politics, while 38 percent view it negatively. There are no significant partisan differences on this, and Republicans and Democrats agree as well on the revolving-door issue.

All segments of the public have little trouble with a third news-delivery practice tested by Pew: news anchors who deliver the news in a "more friendly and informal way." Three-quarters (76 percent) approve of this trend, while 16 percent see it as a bad thing.

The message from the public seems to be that you can say it with a smile, but please give us the straight news. In that regard, the percentage of Americans believing that the press gets the facts straight, acts professionally and compassionately, and is unbiased all slipped significantly this summer; an improvement in the media's public image that emerged after the September 11 attack proved to be short lived. In part, this probably reflected a fading of the emotional response to the 9/11 attack.

The media's public image, however, may have slipped to the pre-9/11 level because coverage has shifted from the attacks and the war on terrorism to more contentious issues. And in the absence of a mega-story like the attacks, many in the media have returned to their exploitive, sensational, and self-promoting ways. So once again the public gives, at best, mediocre ratings to the media for coverage of serious news, while it holds its nose about many practices and deplores increasing "tabloidism" for the sake of commercial interests. ■

Andrew Kohut is director of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.



STABILITY

DONALD GRAHAM'S

WASHINGTON POST

BY SCOTT SHERMAN

On October 1, 1975, at approximately 4:50 A.M., Donald Graham, heir apparent to *The Washington Post*, received a disturbing telephone call. Union members had just beaten a foreman, started a fire, and ransacked the presses at the *Post*.

Thus commenced a lengthy ordeal, during which helicopters landed on the roof of the *Post* to ferry pages to nonunion printing plants; waiters in tuxedos served snacks to workers inside the building; and some reporters who chose to work were harassed and beaten. One despairing pressman even committed suicide.

For Graham, who was thirty years old, the pressmen's strike was a baptism by fire. As assistant general manager during the strike, his job was to get the newspaper out each day without the craft unions, a task he performed with skill, brio, and humility: With a skeleton crew running the paper, the scion of a newspaper fortune was forced to load trucks and push rolls of newsprint. Toby Thompson, who went to prep school with Graham and wrote a searching profile of him in *Esquire* in 1985, quoted a colleague who recalled how, during the strike, Graham, who served in Vietnam, "just glowed — it was like combat duty and he was a commander in battle."

To his mother, Katharine Graham — who became known for her toughness during the strike — it was his moment



of truth. "He was so helpful to me and so instrumental to the paper. I knew then that he was more than ready to take over as publisher," Mrs. Graham said in her 1997 memoir, *Personal History*.

In the years after the strike, Graham inherited *The Washington Post* and left a distinct imprint on it. By the time he relinquished the publisher's job in 2000, the *Post* was extraordinarily successful, both journalistically and financially, and Don Graham had begun to emerge from the long shadow of his mother. These days, as the cheerfully confident CEO of The Washington Post Company, Graham spends much of his time on matters pertaining to other parts of the company (see page 44). The *Post* is still very close to his heart, but the daily administration of it is now in the hands of one of his oldest friends, Bo Jones. Still, Graham remains deeply involved in the enterprise. For instance, Fred Hiatt, the editorial page editor, reports directly to Graham (and not to Jones, the publisher).

Not everyone, however, is enamored of

the paper Graham fashioned in his own image. Even some people who know and admire him — almost all of whom insisted on anonymity — yearn for the scrappy, swashbuckling, incandescent *Post* of the 1970s, the *Post* that printed the Pentagon Papers and toppled Richard Nixon, the *Post* that James Fallows — in an *Esquire* profile of Ben Bradlee in 1976 — hailed as "the most exciting paper to work on, the most interesting one to read, and the one from which wrongdoers had most to fear." Kevin Phillips, the author and commentator, points out that both the *Post* and the rest of the world have changed. "The late sixties and early seventies was a period of political and institutional combat," he says. "*The Washington Post* was part of that combat. I don't think they're part of any combat any more."

Others point to a subtle transformation. Says the former *Post* reporter and editor Haynes Johnson: "It is a better overall paper today, though in my view not as brilliant or as exciting as the older model." Listening to *Post* veterans analyze and assess the newspaper, one senses that something was irretrievably lost in the transition from Katharine Graham to Don Graham. "I look at those pictures of Ben and Mrs. Graham coming out of the courthouse, celebrating the news that they won the Pentagon Papers," says Johnson. "Ben has his fist raised in exultation, and Kay is laughing like hell. *That* captured the spirit of the times better than anything." And the single image that captures the *Post* now? Replies Johnson: "There isn't one."



SALLY QUINN

Reporter, *The Washington Post*



I did a lot of television before September 11. I don't think I've been on more than once or twice in the last year. Chris Matthews said to me one day, "When the war's over I'll call you back on the show." ... I wasn't around during World War II and in Vietnam, everybody was against the war. So I had never seen a situation where journalists basically sided with the administration. I had learned that the role of the journalist was adversarial. And certainly during Watergate and Vietnam and Clinton, too. You were a good American. But your job as an American, as a patriotic American, was to get the bastards to tell the truth. Now the view of a lot of journalists — and it is unspoken — is, We're in a war, We've been attacked. Well, the enemy is over there. Not in the White House. And so are we going to go attack the White House when they're trying to fight a war against the enemy that has actually come and attacked us in our homeland? Now, that did not last for long. But ... it still prevails. A lot of my liberal friends are screaming and yelling: "The press is giving them a free ride" and "How dare they?" and "They're all monsters. They're destroying the country." Well you know? They're not destroying the country. And they're not monsters. And they've made mistakes. And those mistakes deserve to be questioned and looked into and examined. But I still think that there is a reluctance on the part of a lot of people to expose the president and the administration in any negative way for fear that it will make the country look weak. I'm not speaking for myself here. You understand? I'm telling you what I think is what has happened here in Washington, particularly in the world of journalism. And why people have been as easy as they have on the president.

If something was lost in the transition, perhaps something was gained, too. At a time when some large newspaper corporations have sacrificed journalistic quality for quarterly profits, the *Post*, under Don Graham, has maintained a rock-hard stability and a commitment to — and investment in — newsroom excellence. That his company, which went public in 1971, has delivered impressive financial results — particularly in the years after the pressmen's strike — makes that independence and its outstanding journalism possible.

In 1972, Roger Wilkins went to work for *The Washington Post*. He was the first black editorial writer on the staff, and he would go on to write most of the *Post*'s editorials on Watergate. "One day," Wilkins said recently, "this guy shows up at my door. He's a big friendly guy with a big smile and he says" — Wilkins's voice rises to a perfect imitation of Graham's all-American cadence — "Hi, I'm Don Graham and I just want to welcome you to the paper and I just hope that you just have the best time here." Later I figured out who he was. But that was really nice, you know? Nice things like that do not normally happen in newspapers."

Wilkins is not alone in his admiration for Graham. Gary Pruitt, CEO of The McClatchy Company, calls him "the class act of the newspaper industry." Ralph Nader insists that he is "very congenial — a great person to have lunch with." The veteran *Post* columnist Mary McGrory refers to him as "improbably virtuous and improbably humble — as decent a man as I've ever met in my life."

McGrory recalls the illness and subsequent death of Meg Greenfield, the paper's influential editorial page editor and an intimate friend of Katharine Graham. "When it was discovered that the cancer had spread to the brain," McGrory relates, "she happened to be in the West, and Don flew right out to see her. And he went to Johns Hopkins during her last illness and just sat in the room."

Some *Post* reporters appreciate Graham's handwritten notes about their stories, and his accessibility. Last year, Linda Perlstein, who covers education from one of the paper's suburban bureaus, heard that Graham would be attending a public function near her office, so she invited him to stop by; he had never seen the bureau's new offices. He replied instantly and affirmatively. Notes Perlstein: "How many Fortune 500 CEOs can you e-mail and have them reply in five minutes?"

Longtime *Post* watchers praise Graham for his lack of pretense and pomposity. "He pays no attention to the starfucking culture that Katharine Graham was enamored of," says the *Slate* columnist Jack Shafer. "I mean, imagine Truman Capote throwing a party for Donald Graham!"

His modesty can be disarming. Graham has a deep interest in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English literature, and in 1995 he gave the keynote address to the Trollope Society, which he did with grace and style. "Trollope's ghost has had an awful year," he began. "First, the House of Commons voted to outlaw fox hunting. Now this Society, in which the ghost must take great pride, gets lectured to by a figure who represents an unspeakable combination — an American, journalist and businessman — me."

Yet Graham can be rather feisty as well. In 1995, *The New Republic* ran a thirteen-thousand-word article by Ruth Shalit about alleged racial tension in the *Post* newsroom, which prompted an acidic letter from Graham himself. "Since she works at *The New Republic*," Graham's letter stated, "the last practitioner of de facto segregation since Mississippi changed, Ms. Shalit has little or no experience in working with black colleagues." (Graham noted that the magazine, founded in the early part of the century, has "never had a full-time black staffer" and quipped: "Motto: Looking for a qualified black since 1914.")

Graham, however, plays most of his hardball as a businessman. In the early 1990s The Washington Post Company competed for cellular phone licenses through one of its subsidiaries. The FCC had promised that the licenses would be free, but subsequent political wrangling overturned that ruling. Graham is still furious: "We thought this was a simple outrage," he says today. On September 29, 1994, the *Post* editorialized in favor of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade treaty (GATT), and noted that the bill contained "no surprises." But there was a surprise: deep in the GATT legislation was a provision that, competitors complained, would guarantee lucrative licenses to the *Post* company. Rival companies blasted the *Post* in full-page advertisements, and it was soon revealed that Donald Graham himself had lobbied at least one senator, along with the Clinton administration, for the GATT provision involving his company.

Mea culpas soon appeared in the newspaper, and the *Post*'s ombudsman wrote on October 9, 1994, that the controversy was "a heavy blow to the newspaper's credibility."

ity." Shortly thereafter, the *Post* relinquished its cell-phone holdings. The contours of this affair remain opaque even today — although Graham does admit now, "I undoubtedly asked Senator John Danforth to include this provision in the bill." Graham continues: "In hindsight, there should have been an editorial that mentioned this provision in the GATT treaty. We clearly should have done that." But he also says, "We run a business and make no apologies for the fact that we try to run it well."

His father, Philip Graham, was a man who relished the corridors and cloakrooms of power. A graduate of Harvard Law School, Graham came to Washington in the early 1940s, one of the brilliant young New Dealers who surrounded Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter. He married Katharine and inherited *The Washington Post* from her father, Eugene Meyer, who bought it in a 1933 bankruptcy sale. Philip transformed the paper into a solid — if hardly superlative — daily. Perhaps his greatest achievement was the 1954 purchase of the only remaining morning competitor, the *Times-Herald*, which gave the *Post* a near A.M. monopoly. By 1960 it was the top paper in Washington.

From the very start, his first son, Donald, born in 1945, exhibited few of his father's personal and political characteristics. When Philip turned thirty, Eugene Meyer sent a stunningly prescient letter to him: the infant Don is "calm and quiet, and seems to be balanced in a sort of judicial manner," Meyer wrote. "I don't think anybody is going to get him excited if he can help it . . . If you think he is going to be a torch bearer for any of the isms that you want to hand him or try to instill in him, I feel it my duty to tell you I think you are going to be disappointed."

In the late fifties and early sixties, Phil's mental health — he suffered from manic depression — began to deteriorate. In August 1963, with his wife in a nearby room, he shot and killed himself. In memoriam, the *Washington Daily News* printed the poem "Richard Cory" by Edwin Arlington Robinson, about a man who "was a gentleman from sole to crown/clean favored and imperially slim," a man who "fluttered pulses when he said, 'Good Morning,'" a man who, "one calm summer night/went home and put a bullet through his head."

Don Graham was eighteen.

Phil's descent left Katharine in a state of despondency, and she took refuge in friendships. It was James Reston, the columnist, who remarked to her, in the difficult months preceding Phil's suicide, that "you and I can't do anything about Phil, but we can start training Donny, and I would like to take him as my clerk this summer." It was the summer of Phil's death, when Don was a sophomore at Harvard. He would grow up to be a man quite unlike his father, a man who doesn't drink, smoke, chase women, or advise politicians, a man who, friends say, carried a heavy emotional burden throughout his early career. *Esquire* quoted his younger brother Steve as saying of Don: "I don't know why he hasn't jumped out of a window."

At Harvard, Graham gravitated toward the *Harvard Crimson*, where he was elected president in 1965. The insurrectionary spirit of the sixties had come to Harvard, but Graham's circle was, to a certain extent, immune to it. The *Post* reporter Jay Mathews, who was also at the *Crimson*, notes that Graham was presented with a "live baby hawk at the annual *Crimson* dinner Don's senior year, a token of our affectionate recognition that he had kept the *Crimson* on the pro-war side of that debate much longer than most of us were comfortable with."

But Graham was not an armchair warrior. In 1966 he volunteered for the draft and in 1967 the Army sent him to South Vietnam, where he worked as an information officer, a military journalist, and witnessed the end of the battle of Khe Sahn in 1968.

Graham would always take enormous pride in his military service. Haynes Johnson has vivid memories of luncheons in Mrs. Graham's dining room in the early 1970s, occasions where prominent government officials and journalists would mingle, and where Don would forcefully inquire about the military service of his peers. Recalls Johnson: "Don would always have some questions for people his age. What did they do at that time? Did they serve? And if they didn't serve — why not?"

In 1968, Graham returned from Southeast Asia to a nation enveloped by discord. In the first six months of 1969,

there were three hundred major protest demonstrations at colleges and universities, involving a third of the nation's students, along with eighty-four bombings and arson incidents. Like many in his generation, Graham mounted the barricades, but not as an anti-Vietnam protester. He chose order over chaos. In January 1969 he joined the Washington Metropolitan Police Department as a patrolman.

He was sent to what was then the Ninth Precinct in Northeast Washington, a zone that was heavily damaged in the riots of 1968, a zone full of poverty, drugs, vice, and despair. "Everyone knew that he was Katharine Graham's son," says Ike Fulwood, who served in a nearby precinct and later rose to the head of the D.C. police force, "so that made for some interesting conversation." Fulwood remembers him as "a pretty good police officer" — a "guy who talked to people, communicated with them very well." Graham made some friends in the neighborhood: Many years later, the *Post* staffer Katherine Boo would report from the same precinct, and be duly informed by gap-toothed old ladies: "You better get the facts right, or I'll tell Donny!"

Graham arrived at the *Post* in 1971, where he was a general-assignment reporter and wrote some book reviews. He did a brief stint at *Newsweek*, and spent a blissful year as the *Post's* sports editor. In 1974 he was elected a director of The Washington Post Company. Graham was not unaware of the labor trouble within the newspaper; it was a matter of great concern within the Graham family for years.

In October 1975, after the pressroom was ransacked, the unions walked out. But

The Washington Post

The Washington Post

Br.ilent, right-minded
important speed piece.
Hope it gets some reaction
Don Graham

Excellent, balanced
piece on Vietnam.
Don Graham

The Post Company's New Profile

BY MICHAEL SCHERER

When Donald Graham presented The Washington Post Company's financial results to investors this summer, he did not begin with his flagship newspaper or his award-winning magazine. In fact, his comments about ad sales, readership, and newsprint costs at *The Washington Post* and *Newsweek* came almost as an afterthought, squeezed into the last eight minutes of a thirty-two-minute presentation.

Graham focused instead on subjects foreign to most newspaper investors, but increasingly familiar to Post company stockholders: academic tutoring, digital cable television, and the future of graduate school enrollments. "The path we've been on has been different enough from other companies over the years," Graham explained in the presentation at the Mid-Year Media Review in Manhattan this June. "We really don't focus primarily on short-term results."

Nor, in recent years, has the company focused on the news business for growth. The company's magazine and newspaper divisions, which accounted for 68 percent of revenue in 1993, continue to grow. But they now bring in only 51 percent of total revenue. The company has invested \$1.5 billion in for-profit education and cable divisions since the early 1990s. Education alone accounted for one in every five dollars the company collected in 2001, up from just 5 percent of revenue when Graham became chairman in 1993.

If the growth continues, the education business, called Kaplan Inc., is poised to outstrip the newspaper business in size, leading investment analysts to consider covering the Post as an education stock. "Until recently Kaplan has been this sort of interesting aside," said Trace Urdan, an education analyst at ThinkEquity. "But it has grown, and it is becoming more important to a point where investors have to pay attention."

Put simply, The Washington Post Company is no longer the same company that Graham's mother, Katharine, took public in 1971, with roughly equal investments in newspapers and magazines, and a smaller investment in broadcast television. Donald Graham now oversees CableOne, the seventeenth-largest cable provider in

North America, nearly 200 tutoring centers, and forty-five for-profit colleges and career training schools. He also commands the nation's only online law school, a burgeoning test-preparation business, and a growing cable Internet business.

For his part, Graham says the company is simply following a strategy laid out by his mother, with advice from Warren Buffett, a major shareholder: Keep the news divisions editorially and economically strong, while increasing value for investors with low-priced acquisitions. "As a company, we are agnostic about which of our businesses we make acquisitions in," Graham said. He added that values in the education market have been more promising in recent years, a belief that has provided the company with a growing buffer against drops in advertising spending.

This transformation has increased the need for vigilant editorial protections on the news side. Both for-profit education and the cable business are political hot-potatoes, dependent on federal regulations and funding. Kaplan has also played a role in influencing the debate over privatizing public school tutoring and offering standardized tests to grade-school students. It has left the company's journalists in the awkward, but increasingly common, position of reporting on their own company. "I feel like all of us who have to deal with the occasional Washington Post Company story in our reporting, uncomfortable," explained Jay Mathews, the Post's education columnist.

Company editors, reporters, and executives insist safeguards are firmly in place. "Our protections are named Leonard Downie and Mark Whitaker," Graham said, referring to the editors of the *Post* and *Newsweek*. His charge to them:

"Editorial policy will be made regardless of the company's interest." As a result, *Post* editorial writers do not respond to their parent company's interests, says Fred Hiatt, the editorial page editor. Likewise, the company's lobbying work on Capitol Hill always defers to the newspaper's opinion. Executives, for example, recently scrapped plans to lobby for legislation that would reform federal pension regulation after a critical *Post* editorial, says Patrick Butler, the company's vice president in charge of public policy. "We've never had a problem with

the striking pressmen soon received an ugly surprise: *Post* management had prepared nonunion employees at special training facilities in Oklahoma, Miami, and Washington, and within one day, produced a paper with nonunion labor. In the end, management refused to buckle, permanent replacements were brought in, and most of the pressmen lost their jobs. The union was broken.

Asked about the strike recently, Don Graham replied: "It never should have occurred." In two long conversations with *CJR*, Graham was mostly cheerful and relaxed (and guarded) — until the matter of the strike came up, at which point a rough edge entered his voice: "I was told that the Harvard Business School taught

a case on that strike for a number of years in their labor relations course," he explains. "They dropped it because in a special program they conducted on labor relations involving management and union participants, the union people objected that the union behavior in *The Washington Post* pressmen's strike was so bizarre, so wildly atypical of normal union behavior, that it would mislead business students and management representatives about the nature of unions."

Other people have a different view. *Esquire's* Thompson quoted a former *Post* national editor, Ben Bagdikian, as saying: "The pressmen were stupid, but the paper was deliberately goading them. It was trying to break the union

— I don't think there was any question about that." Bagdikian, who brought the Pentagon Papers to the *Post* and thereby produced the second biggest story in the paper's history, still feels that way today.

Twenty-seven years later, labor trouble persists at the *Post*, although the remaining unions are weak. In June, to coincide with the paper's 125th anniversary, reporters associated with The Newspaper Guild, which has eight hundred members at the *Post*, launched a byline strike to protest a breakdown in contract negotiations. Nearly every reporter complied. "I think Don, overall, is the best newspaper publisher in America, as his mother was before him," says the *Post* reporter and union activist Peter Perl. "Unfortunately,

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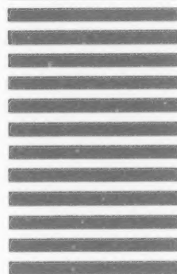
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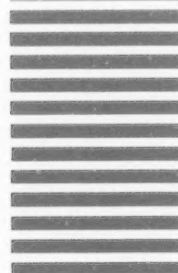
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people being confused with what *The Washington Post* is saying editorially and what *The Washington Post* company would like to see," he said.

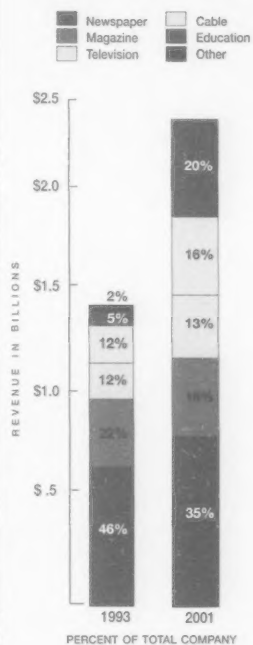
That has not stopped the company from lobbying on a wide range of regulatory interests, however. Between 1997 and 2000, The Washington Post Company's disclosed federal lobbying expenditures increased eightfold, from \$40,000 to \$324,000, far outstripping what most other newspaper companies disclosed. (Lobbying costs have since declined significantly at the *Post*, with executives expecting costs to drop by more than half this year.) In 2001 the company paid \$80,000 to a lobbying firm whose main role was to monitor the progress of President George Bush's education initiative, a new law that will likely increase business both for Kaplan's tutoring program and its rapidly expanding test-preparation business. It has also worked closely with Senator Pete Domenici on a \$4.6 million federal job-training program, a portion of which would benefit a Kaplan subsidiary in New Mexico.

Overall, the newspaper's editorials have supported these interests, calling for higher school standards, the use of vouchers, and further exploration of online education. In most articles and editorials, the potential conflicts of interest are prominently disclosed. But disclosures have not insulated the company from criticism for its coverage of education issues.

In 1998 *Newsweek* ran a cover story called, "Does Your Child Need a Tutor?" which included color photos and editorial descriptions of ebullient students at a Kaplan tutor center. "High fives are exchanged for real good efforts, and every success is awesome," reads one description of one such center. Timothy Mullaney, now an editor for *Business Week*, was assigned essentially the same story a few months later as a free-lancer for *The Washington Post Magazine*. But Mullaney's reporting led him to far less bullish conclusions about the tutoring business, making him skeptical of the motivations

WASHINGTON POST COMPANY REVENUE

From 1993, When Graham Became Chairman, to 2001



Source: Washington Post Company

behind the *Newsweek* package. "I thought it was seriously below *Newsweek's* standards, and I wondered where it came from," Mullaney said, adding that his *Post* editors, who ran his story, never questioned his skepticism.

For *Newsweek's* Whitaker, such criticism is misplaced. The story originated, he says, from his observations of his own children's experience, not from his company. "I was seeing it in their schools, just talking to friends," he said. "We were quite conscious of making sure that we reported it in a straight, even-handed way." The *Newsweek* story, he added, included reporting on Kaplan's competitors and discussion of the tutoring industry's limitations.

More recently, the *Post's* editorial page went to bat for its own company in a debate over the propriety of online education. In an unsigned piece, Amy Schwartz, a member of the paper's editorial board, wrote about a spat between Harvard University's law school and Concord Law School, the online subsidiary of Kaplan. In 2000, Harvard had prevented one of its professors from taping lectures for Concord, since it considered the online school a competitor. After disclosing the paper's relationship to Concord, Schwartz's editorial suggested that Harvard's caution was somewhat exaggerated. "We can't help thinking," the editorial read, "that the likelihood of videotaped lectures becoming a competitive threat is just another of those fervid, mostly overblown predictions of how the Internet will alter human behavior." Hiatt says neither Graham nor anyone else at the company gave any input to the editorial. But Graham is

involved in the issues Schwartz raised. At the Mid-Year Media Review in June, Graham offered an editorial aside of his own after reporting the profitable graduation of Concord's first class: "Take that, Harvard law school!" he told the audience of investors. •

Michael Scherer is an assistant editor of *CJR*.

I think they also shared a blind spot about labor unions following the 1975 strike and are still fighting that battle, which is demoralizing to those of us who love working at the *Post*."

What's clear is that the newspaper, and the company, prospered in the years after the 1975 strike. "While the *Post* was hurt for a time," Howard Bray wrote in his 1980 book, *The Pillars of the Post*, "the strike in the long run was actually a bonanza for the company." In her co-authored introduction to the *Post* Company's 1977 annual report, Katharine Graham gushed, "The return on shareholders' equity was the best in our history, twenty-five percent for the year. Our financial position has never been stronger."

As a publisher, Graham, to an overwhelming extent, concentrated his efforts on building the *Post's* local circulation. Not everyone welcomed that focus; some employees lamented his unwillingness to expand nationally. "He would not, to our frustration, create a daily national edition," says Haynes Johnson. But Johnson is glad that "the *Post* is even more rooted in its local community than it was when I first came there" in 1969.

Graham himself has no regrets. He claims the current circulation strategy goes all the way back to the 1950s, when *Post* circulation executives were, in his words, "aggressively looking for readers not only in the city of Washington, and

not only in the immediately surrounding suburbs, but thirty, forty, fifty miles beyond on the assumption that would one day be part of the Washington area." It's a strategy that has paid off: the *Post* has one of the highest local penetration rates of any daily in the United States. Says Graham: "The *Chicago Tribune* and the *Los Angeles Times*, which are sensational papers, have about twenty percent penetration in their home counties, in L.A. county and Cook county. The *Post* is more than twice that in eleven counties and the District of Columbia."

The *Post* has benefited from a wide variety of geographical, historical and economic factors. The Washington, D.C., area, according to Graham, is "a hell of an

area to publish a newspaper in" — especially, he might have added, in the years following 1981, when the *Washington Star*, the paper's main competitor, folded. Says newspaper analyst John Morton, "Washington is probably the best newspaper market in the country." In an attempt to fully conquer that market, the *Post* now produces ten weekly zoned supplements (known as "extras"); and in 1992 the company purchased the *Gazette Newspapers*, a chain of free suburban weeklies. A lax regulatory climate made that kind of acquisition possible. Says John Morton: "Twenty years ago the Justice Department would never have allowed the *Post* to buy up those suburban papers."

On the editorial front, some people think that the *Post's* efforts on behalf of local coverage have paid off handsomely. "The *Post* is very well manned and covers state politics for two states and one very enormous city," says *Slate's* Shafer. "I give them as good a mark or better than any metropolitan paper in the country. The paper's metro section is probably stronger than it has been for a long time." Others disagree. Harry Jaffe, who pens the "Post Watch" column for *Washingtonian* magazine and is the co-author of *Dream City: Race, Power, and the Decline of Washington, D.C.*, insists that the *Post* "is getting killed by *The Washington Times* on a daily basis. The *Times* covers the local politics of the District of Columbia on a day-to-day basis much better than the *Post*. The *Post* covers it when it feels like it." Interestingly, Ben Bradlee himself does not entirely disagree with Jaffe's view. Asked how serious a competitor *The Washington Times* has been on local coverage, Bradlee, who at the age of eighty-one holds the title of vice president at large at the *Post*, replies: "I think it may be more serious than we think it is. I see them get some local stories that I think the *Post* doesn't have and should have had."

Between 1979 and 1983, Graham was forced to confront a number of newsroom crises as publisher. There was the Janet Cooke affair, in which a *Post* reporter concocted a tale of an eight-year-old heroin addict named "Jimmy"; there was the Tavoulareas case, in which the *Post* was sued by the president of Mobil after the paper reported that he used the company to set up his son in business; and there was at least one instance in which the

newspaper had to publicly apologize for the work of a reporter. People who know Graham say that these events made a cautious man even more cautious. For Graham, the Janet Cooke affair was especially traumatic. His initial response was to defend the piece unequivocally when readers argued that it was surely fictional and demanded that the paper produce the child. On October 7, 1980, shortly after the Cooke piece ran and months before it was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing, Graham sent a note to Janet Cooke. It appears in Tom Kelly's 1983 book *The Imperial Post*:

With all the turmoil of the last weeks, it's important that one say the basic thing: not only was that a very fine story in Sunday's paper a week ago, it was only one of many you've done in the last year. The *Post* has no more important and tougher job than explaining life in the black community in Washington. A special burden gets put on black reporters doing that job and a double-special burden on black reporters who try to see life with their own eyes instead of seeing it the way they're told they should. The *Post* seems to have many such reporters. You belong very high up among them . . . And you went through your tests of last week with what seemed to me world class composure. Sincerely, Don

Friends say he died a thousand deaths over her subsequent exposure. "Of course he did," says Ben Bradlee. "You think any of us didn't?"

In the wake of the Cooke affair, some *Post* staff members say, Graham took steps to lower the temperature of the newspaper — a process that, to a certain extent, had been taking place since Watergate — and top staff people expressed dissatisfaction. In 1985, Bob Woodward grumbled to *Esquire* that Graham's efforts had served to "calm down the paper editorially. He's uncomfortable with stories like Watergate." When Graham became publisher in 1979, Bradlee submitted his resignation, arguing that the publisher should appoint his own editor. Graham kept Bradlee in the top job until 1991. But he also groomed Leonard Downie as Bradlee's successor, even though Bradlee himself wanted a very different kind of man to follow him: the future *Los Angeles Times* editor, Shelby Coffey. Many people inside the newsroom felt that Coffey, who had been a top *Post* editor, could have brought a Bradlee-like élan and panache to the newspaper.

At the time, people noted a powerful

chemistry between Graham and Downie. "There is a strange, mutual attraction between the two of them," the late Herbert Denton, one of Graham's closest friends, told the *Washingtonian* in 1992. "They communicated so well, it was almost wordless at times." Downie, who became executive editor in 1991, was (and is) a steady, solid, hard-working newspaperman who helped to edit the *Post's* Watergate coverage, and rose through the ranks of the Metro section. He was always passionate about investigative reporting, and in 1976 he published a book entitled *The New Muckrakers*.

The book consisted of lively profiles of writers like Seymour Hersh, I.F. Stone, and Donald Barlett and James Steele, and it glowed with an idealism and headiness typical of the post-Watergate period. In it, Downie approvingly quoted the London *Sunday Times* editor, Harold Evans: "We can create an agenda for society." *The New Muckrakers* concluded with a ringing affirmation: "There is no reason . . . for the press to make any post-Watergate reconciliation with government by abandoning its present adversary posture."

The man whom Don Graham chose to replace Ben Bradlee mellowed considerably during the Reagan years. In a 1992 column, Downie explained, in the context of the paper's endorsement of Bill Clinton, that journalists are people who "cannot be expected to completely cleanse their professional minds of human emotions and opinions," but that the *Post* wanted its reporters and editors to "come as close as possible to doing just that." Downie added: "In the most extreme effort of this kind, I no longer exercise my right to vote."

It must be said that Graham and Downie have put out an excellent newspaper. Top-notch articles appear in the *Post* virtually every day, and the paper has garnered numerous prizes, including thirteen Pulitzers. The *Post* does superb investigative work (most notably on police misconduct), and the news pages are still infused with sympathy for the underdog. For instance, the paper's front page for August 6 contained no less than three powerful stories — on the impoverishment of Argentina's working class, on the suffering of civilians in the West Bank, and on the displacement of immigrant workers in the U.S. — with a strong social justice angle. The *Post* was justifiably applauded (and awarded) for its sweeping, expansive coverage of September 11. The

paper breaks important stories on a regular basis. The national reporting staff is first-rate; the foreign reporting shines; the sports pages are strong. There is much grumbling, however, about the Style section, which nevertheless continues to feature much superb writing.

Few doubt that Don Graham's newspaper is very different from his mother's. "Mrs. Graham brought gumption and serendipity to the job with her hires and how she dealt with confrontation," says Harry Jaffe of the *Washingtonian*, who

has been observing the *Post* for twenty-five years. "Don Graham is just more of a collected individual. He measures everything. And I think that really shows with the newspaper that he publishes. *The Washington Post* newsroom is kind of a deadened place now." Says Henry Allen, a Style editor: "The atmosphere in the newsroom is the same as the atmosphere up in classified. People staring at computer screens."

Such complaints are not unique to the *Post*, and it has to be noted that, in cer-

tain respects, the newsroom culture may have changed for the better. Downie's newsroom is less macho and elitist — and more egalitarian — than Bradlee's.

What does Bradlee himself think? Two years ago, in a conversation with *The New Yorker*, he let his guard down and remarked that Graham "just doesn't like controversy." In a recent chat with *CJR*, he was much more circumspect, but he did allow: "I worry about the cumulative effect of being a near-monopoly paper. I don't think people work as hard as we all

The Other Paper

BY DANTE CHINNI

The line between politics and just about anything else in Washington has always been thin. But even by D.C. standards, *The Washington Times* is a special case. Consider this sampling of recent front-page headlines:

DEMOCRAT'S FORMER FIRM NAMED IN
SCHEME TO INFLATE STOCK PRICES

ECONOMY'S WOES TIED TO CLINTON-ERA
FISCAL ABUSES

FATHERS OF FAITH GIVE MORE TIME
TO THEIR CHILDREN

TAILHOOK SCANDAL 'INJUSTICE' RIGHTED;
RETIRED OFFICER TO GET PROMOTION

CHURCH, STATE 'WALL' NOT IDEA OF JEFFERSON;
FEAR OF CATHOLICS BY JUSTICE CITED

REPUBLICANS PUSH MINORITY CANDIDATES

If you detect a tilt here, you aren't alone. "The *Times* still provides the conservative political perspective from a nuts and bolts approach," says the conservative author Kevin Phillips. "They have everything in the paper from the mainstream right to the far right to the flaky right."

Conservative, yes, but not Republican, says the *Times* editor-in-chief, Wesley Pruden. "We are not a Republican paper. We are conservative, but conservative with a small c. We have a very eclectic curiosity and we sometimes have a front-page story that others wouldn't."

Born amid the Reagan revolution, the paper was launched twenty years ago by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church, who wanted a paper that would fight communism and serve as a conservative counterweight to the liberal media biases — meaning *The*

Washington Post — that he believed ruled D.C.

Since then, though, conservative media voices have erupted like cherry blossoms along the Potomac — from talk radio to *The Weekly Standard* to Fox News. But inside the Beltway, people still read the *Times* precisely for that other perspective that Moon intended. "A lot of lobbyists and people on the Hill get it," says Charlie Cook, publisher of the *Cook Political Report*. "But you really have to read the whole thing with an eye toward 'interesting, if true.'"

So the *Times*'s tilt, then, can be a strength, too. It forces stories into the mainstream that might not otherwise get there. DEMOCRATS DON'T PLAN TO QUESTION RUBIN was the headline on a page-one story July 25 that revealed how, in their rush to grill Citigroup officials about their role in hiding Enron's debt, Senate Democrats overlooked Robert Rubin, the former Clinton treasury secretary. The day after the Rubin story, Howard Kurtz, the *Post*'s media writer, wrote an article taking the press to task for not asking questions about Rubin's role in Enron.

In addition to giving voice to stories that, as Pruden says, "others miss," the *Times* plays an important role in Washington's journalistic farm system. The paper has been a springboard for young reporters to jobs at *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, even the *Post*. Lorraine Woellert, who worked at the *Times* from 1992 to 1998, says her experience there allowed her to jump directly to her current job at *Business Week*. "I got a lot of opportunities very quickly. They appreciated and rewarded talent and, frankly, there was a lot of turnover."

From the beginning, the *Times*'s affiliation with Moon saddled it with the percep-



tion, rightly or not, that it was a "Moonie" paper. Pruden and others at the paper strongly protest this label, but it has proved impossible to shake entirely. At the *Times*'s twentieth anniversary party in May, for example, Moon delivered an hour-long speech in Korean that featured lines like, "The *Washington Times* will become the instrument in spreading the truth about God to the world."

Pruden says Moon hasn't visited the *Times* in at least a year, and doesn't pressure him editorially. Still, it is Moon's largess that keeps the *Times* afloat. Exact numbers on the privately owned paper are hard to get, but published reports indicate Moon has sunk nearly \$2 billion into the *Times*. Ads fill, on average, only about 35 percent of the *Times*'s pages, compared with the industry average of 50 to 60 percent. Circulation is up — 109,000 Monday through Friday — but is still only a fraction of the *Post*'s 810,000. Commercially, then, the *Times* is kind of a skinny-looking contender in the D.C. ring, held up by its trainer. Editorially, however, it still packs a wicked right hook. *

Dante Chinni is a senior associate at the Project for Excellence in Journalism.

used to. I really don't. You can swing a cat around that place in weekends and sometimes not hit anybody."

Such is the power of Don Graham and *The Washington Post* that, of the sixty people contacted for this article, only a handful would assess the strengths and weaknesses of Graham's newspaper. One who did is longtime *Post*-watcher Ralph Nader, who is full of admiration for the *Post*'s long investigative features and who says that "they do some very good work in the 'A' section." But Nader does detect a significant shift in the reporting in the Graham era: "When you do a feature, you turn the newspaper into a magazine," says Nader. "Reporting means that you report on an evolving issue and all the players — like they did on auto safety when I was going after General Motors and there were congressional hearings and legislation. *They stayed with the story*. Therefore, they made it happen. They don't do that anymore."

Downie takes issue with Nader. "I think the newspaper's been full of edgy coverage of all different kinds in recent years — locally, nationally, internationally." And he insists that the *Post* does stick with key stories: "David Hilzenrath is the *only* newspaper reporter in the U.S. to do a series of articles demonstrating the problems in the accounting industry before all hell broke loose — the only reporter. It was out there all by itself. No other media picked it up. It was Ralph Naderish, if you will. We stuck with that." Downie continues, "What we don't do is select particular issues, decide what we want the outcome to be, and then pursue that, which sometimes Ralph would like us to do, because that's what he does. And I understand that." Gone, for better or worse, is the fiery young man who, two years after Watergate, believed, along with Harold Evans, that "we can create an agenda for society."

Along with Nader, a few *Post* veterans did volunteer their candid opinions. Says Haynes Johnson: "The *Post* seems to me, in recent years, to have become more and more conservative."

The *Post*'s editorial pages are a source of much dissatisfaction among many *Post*-watchers. At his mother's urging, one of Don Graham's first and most important acts as publisher was to remove the longtime editorial page editor, Philip Geyelin, who was a solid liberal, and replace him with Meg Greenfield, a maverick with strong neoconservative leanings. Many observers say the pages have been

drifting right ever since. In October 2001, the former *Post* editorial writer and syndicated columnist Colman McCarthy published a scathing article in *The Progressive* entitled "Why the *Washington Post* Op-Ed Page is So Dull." McCarthy monitored the *Post* op-ed page daily for three months, and concluded that "it is a sheet of numbing sameness: centrist or rightwing viewpoints, listless writing, and pro-establishment megaphonics." Friends say that Graham has grown increasingly conservative in recent years, and that the op-ed page — which features Robert Novak, Charles Krauthammer, and George Will as regular columnists — is not inconsistent with his own views. What is clear is that it's a page in which conservative voices are very strong and liberal voices are very weak.

Asked for his opinion of the *Progressive* piece, Hiatt replies mildly, "I don't remember the piece well enough to give you a general response." But he does take the opportunity to announce the latest addition to the *Post*'s editorial board — the gifted (and conservative) writer Anne Applebaum, whose work has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Spectator*, and *The Daily Telegraph*, and who will join the paper in October. Hiatt does have his fans, though. "I think Fred Hiatt will be one of the best appointments of Don Graham's tenure," says Jaffe of *The Washingtonian*.

If the *Post* became more politically conservative under Don Graham, to a certain extent it also became more stylistically adventurous. The paper is extremely well written and edited. One morning a few weeks ago, Graham was excited about a long front-page story by the *Post*'s China correspondent, Philip Pan, which he called "astonishing." Pan's story chronicled a group of construction workers in Shenzhen, who filed a lawsuit against a state-owned employer that had robbed them of their pensions. In tone and texture, in the way in which the author chronicled a shift in his subjects' political consciousness, Pan's piece was closer to a magazine article than a newspaper story — a fact that is true for much of the best writing in the *Post*. On July 25, Philip Kennicott wrote an article entitled "A Window On the Mind of Moussaoui," which argued that his legal documents constitute an "autobiographical tract" written in legalese. "It is a document of a mind and a man facing death and afraid of dishonor, sometimes rambling and discursive, yet with threads of logic and flashes of bril-

liance." Graham cares about good writing, and his newspaper is setting high standards for it.

Still, despite Graham and Downie's best efforts, the long shadow of Ben Bradlee hangs over *The Washington Post*. Adds Jaffe: "It's still a great newspaper and it still has great reporters. Len is a good editor and is deservedly tired of being measured against Ben Bradlee. But that's like saying let's talk about the United States and forget about the Civil War." Ben Bagdikian recalls: "Bradlee wanted something lively every single day. He used to say at editorial meetings, 'I want people to pick up this fucking paper every morning and look at it and say *holy shit!*'" "Downie heeds the Grahams very, very loyally," says Ralph Nader. "He doesn't stretch them. I think Bradlee stretched the Grahams. Leonard reflects the Grahams."

In 1970 Bradlee wrote the foreword to a collection of essays by one of his writers, Nicholas von Hoffman, who was an outrageous provocateur during his ten-year stay at *The Washington Post*. Von Hoffman never went to college; he worked in the Chicago stockyards and later served as a political organizer for the community activist Saul Alinsky; Bradlee hired him from the *Chicago Daily News*. He was a brilliant reporter, and also wrote an incendiary column for the *Style* section. In her memoirs, Mrs. Graham wrote: "My life would have been a lot simpler had Nicholas von Hoffman not appeared in the paper." But, to her credit, she added that "I firmly believed that he belonged at the *Post*." In his foreword, Bradlee compared him to H.L. Mencken and wrote:

The columns that follow first appeared in *The Washington Post*. They are not for everyone — not for those who feel that all's right with the world, not for those whose cows are sacred, and surely not for those who fear the violent contradictions of our time. Rather they are for those who agree with Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., that it is "required of a man that he should share the passion and action of his times at peril of being judged not to have lived."

It's a beautiful paragraph, full of verve, adventurousness, and soul — qualities that many people feel were abundant in Katharine Graham's *Post*, and lacking in her son's. These days, there are no Menckens or von Hoffmans at the *Post*, and Bradlee himself is an ornament.

Now, when people talk about innovative voices at the *Post*, they refer most frequently to the thirty-four-year-old Style writer Hank Stuever — a significant talent, certainly, but no von Hoffman.

Von Hoffman himself has a clear-eyed sense of what happened to his old newspaper under Don Graham's tenure. He lives in Maine now, and remains a journalistic gadfly. He writes an abrasive biweekly column for *The New York Observer*. Von Hoffman points to larger shifts in the newspaper business: "The *Post* can no longer be an instrument of a particular person's mentality, or politics, or whatever. It has to keep in mind at all times those stockholders. You have to see the *Post* in the shape of the rest of the industry. It's very difficult to deviate.

"It has the problems that newspapers have, although to a lesser extent, because it still has this vast number of government workers who go down to the office every day and have nothing to do but sip coffee and read the paper. I always thought that gave the *Post* an unfair advantage over other newspapers."

In his view, the quality has held steady: "I read the *Post* from time to time and it's an eminently respectable newspaper." And he is not unkind toward the current editor, Leonard Downie. "Downie makes absolutely good sense for this era. He's a decent guy — he really is a decent guy — and he is a hard worker. He has ethics; he truly does. He is concerned about the news business. But, to use an idiom of the moment, he's 'in the box.' He's definitely within the box. But all of American journalism is within the box."

Von Hoffman notes that his *Post* was the product of a specific time and place, a time when a mass audience demanded eccentric, combative journalism; a time when family-owned newspapers tolerated quirks and leaned toward the unconventional. And it was a time when society was in upheaval. Those days are gone. He offers a sobering thought: "If Ben Bradlee were forty years old today, he would not be hired as a major editor on any American newspaper. Period." When that question is put to Bradlee himself, he replies in an instant: "It could be true. If other things were equal, I think I might be hired at the *Post*."

Yet Don Graham's conservatism cuts in various directions. At a time when chains like Knight Ridder and Gannett have endeavored to squeeze every last

dollar from their newspapers, Graham has quietly invested in the *Post*: building it, sustaining it, conserving it. The number of reporters and editors and bureaus has grown impressively during his tenure; despite years of unprofitability, he stuck with *The Washington Post Magazine*, and this year it finally approached profitability; despite continual losses, *Book World*, a first-rate operation, has been allowed to remain a stand-alone weekly section. Graham has been a consistent champion of the paper's fine (and money-losing) Web site. All this is in stark contrast to general trends in the newspaper industry.

To his credit, Graham has also supported the presence of an ombudsman, who files a weekly report on the editorial page. No such position exists at *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*.

Graham takes pride in his independence from Wall Street. (When the *Post* went public in 1971, the family retained the controlling votes.) "We have never done quarterly conference calls describing our earnings," Graham says. "We pay no attention to what Wall Street analysts are estimating we're going to make for the quarter. We don't particularly care what we're going to make for the quarter. And we have told them so." And he makes no apologies about investing in the newspaper: "You can look at the papers that invest the most in their newsrooms in the United States," says Graham, "and the business results aren't bad."

"Don's view is," says Gary Pruitt of McClatchy, "you get the shareholders you deserve. In other words, we don't want shareholders that are looking at quarterly results. We want ones that only look longer term." Says Jay Harris, the former publisher of the *San Jose Mercury News*: "In all of the years that I have watched Don, he has always put the public trust first."

A crucial test for a publisher is the extent to which he's willing to defend his own staff in times of distress. Patrick Tyler was the *Post* reporter who, in 1979, wrote the story about Mobil; the ensuing lawsuit dragged on for years, and ultimately cost the paper \$1.5 million. Tyler, who now writes for *The New York Times*, notes that the *Post* defended the suit "tenaciously, bringing in the best legal team money could buy."

"The day we lost the trial," Tyler recalls, "Don Graham met me at the elevator to the fifth-floor newsroom and said,

'I want to walk with you' through the room to visibly show his support. Katharine gave me a bear hug that I will never forget. She almost cracked my ribs. I had thought my career was over, and so their determination to take the case all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary was one of the most singular acts of editorial courage in the face of a determined assault by a disingenuous corporate adversary that I had ever witnessed."

Graham is not eager to discuss the question of succession at the *Post*; none of his four children work for the newspaper at present. Yet key steps have already been taken concerning succession within the newsroom: In 1998 Steve Coll was appointed managing editor; he is now the leading contender to replace Downie. Coll, who shared a Pulitzer Prize for explanatory journalism in 1990, is the author of four books, and in January 2000 he published a stunning ten-thousand-word dispatch from the nightmarish battleground of Sierra Leone in the paper's Sunday magazine. No major newspaper editor has written a better piece in years. Many reporters admire him, and one suspects that Coll is a man who could, in a best-case scenario, bring things full circle by combining some of Bradlee's panache with Downie's solidity and steadiness. For his part, Ralph Nader admires Coll's skill as an investigative reporter, and has high hopes for him in the future.

But the *Post*, like *The New York Times*, is destined to disappoint the Ralph Naders of the world. It is a profoundly centrist institution, given to glacial movements. In *The Kingdom and the Power*, his book on the *Times*, Gay Talese compared it to a "deep-rooted flexible tree that moved from left to right, right to left, making its quiet adjustments as it dropped its tired old leaves and rebloomed through a century of seasons." Katharine Graham will be remembered for the Pentagon Papers and Watergate; one suspects that Don Graham will be remembered for preserving the franchise in an epoch of journalistic degradation and tawdry capitalist excess. He has trimmed the branches and kept the roots strong, making it possible for the tree to relinquish its tired old leaves and rebloom through the seasons. ■

Scott Sherman is a *CJR* contributing editor. His article on Robert Caro appeared in the May/June issue. Seth Stephens contributed research to this article.



TV'S BIG STICK

*Why the Broadcast Industry Gets
What It Wants in Washington*

BY NEIL HICKEY

On June 19, the second shoe dropped.

The first had finally fallen on March 27 when, after seven years of bitter partisan wrangling, the McCain-Feingold bill banning unregulated soft money in national elections was signed into law by President Bush. Among the reasons the bill had such a rocky road through Congress: a provision mandating that television and radio stations provide free airtime to political candidates in the period leading up to elections. So virulent was the broadcast industry's reaction to the provision that Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona, and his cosponsors reluctantly removed it from their bill as a compromise to help assure passage.

Fast forward to June 19. The McCain team announced they'd introduce a new bill that would require TV and radio stations to hand over at least two hours a week to political candidates for debates, interviews, and town hall meetings. It's the natural and crucial next step, they argued, to opening up the electoral process to candidates with the best ideas, not just the most money. "This proposal simply tells broadcasters to give back to the American people some of the extraordinary benefits they have reaped from the public airwaves that they are licensed to use for free," said the senators in a joint statement.

And so began another battle in the trench warfare between powerful, irreconcilable forces. Dug in on one side in a daunting fortification was an influential coalition organized by the five-year-old Washington-based Alliance for Better

Campaigns. Among its members: the AFL-CIO, AARP, Common Cause, Consumers Union, the NAACP, the National Council of Churches, the Sierra Club, and more than forty others. Fronting the alliance are two former presidents, Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, along with Walter Cronkite.

If that power-packed line-up sounds formidable, take a look in the other trench: the National Association of Broadcasters, which represents most of the nation's television and radio stations. Led by a soft-spoken, sixty-one-year-old, million-dollar-a-year Mississippian, Edward O. "Eddie" Fritts — a former small-town radio station owner, a University of Mississippi classmate of the Senate minority leader, Trent Lott — the NAB has chalked up a virtually unbroken series of triumphs against any enemy that would dare impose unwanted obligations on the broadcast industry. As the battle unfolds, it is not the NAB that is looking nervous.

As a classic example and case history of the use of power in Washington, the free-airtime controversy has few equals. Broadcasters have successfully demolished at least a dozen previous attempts to mandate free airtime. Starting in 1996 to 1998, they spent almost \$11 million in that cause, according to the Washington-based Center for Public Integrity, a watchdog that tracks political spending. In his 1998 State of the Union address, President Clinton said he would order the Federal Communica-

tions Commission to provide free or lower-cost television time for candidates. Days later, the FCC received messages from a light brigade of legislators — Republicans and Democrats — with the implied threat that the agency's budget would be in real peril if it dared follow through on Clinton's directive. That ended that. It was a stinging defeat for the president and the FCC.

Later that year, a twenty-two-member White House advisory panel (the Gore commission, cochaired by Norman Ornstein, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, and Les Moonves, president of CBS Television) failed to agree on a free-airtime mandate after a deadlock developed between the broadcasters on the panel and the consumer advocates. Instead, the commission recommended that television stations — voluntarily — offer at least five minutes a night of what they called "candidate-centered discourse" during the month before elections. It was yet another victory for broadcast lobbyists. (Almost all the nation's

1,300 commercial television stations have ignored the recommendation. For the 2000 elections, stations typically aired just forty-five seconds a night of candidate discourse, according to the Alliance for Better Campaigns.)

But victory is a commonplace for the NAB. Examples: In separate battles in the 1980s and 1990s, broadcasters forced cable and satellite systems to make space on their systems for the programs of all local



EDWARD O. FRITTS

television stations. During that same period, they successfully fought the creation of new low-power radio and TV stations that would have given consumers more voices in their communities. A plan by Senator Robert Torricelli of New Jersey for reduced-cost political ads — and thus, reduced need for campaign contributions — earned broadcasters' wrath and was defeated in 2001. A wave of media mergers and consolidations followed the NAB's successful lobbying for the 1996 Telecommunications Act, creating unprecedented concentration of power among media companies.

No such victory came even close, however, to matching the NAB's triumph in helping acquire for the nation's television stations, free of charge, a large chunk of publicly owned airwaves to be used for the transition to digital television — spectrum space worth tens of billions of dollars on the open market. William Safire, the *New York Times* columnist, famously called it a "ripoff . . . on a scale vaster than dreamed of by yesteryear's robber barons." Senator McCain saw it as "one of the greatest scams in American history." Senator Bob Dole, the majority leader at the time, called it a "giant corporate welfare program."

Adam Thierer, a telecommunications analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute (he opposes mandated free airtime), says there has been "no bigger public policy fiasco" than the spectrum gift to broadcasters because hundreds of high-tech companies had been ready to "spend lavish, outrageous amounts of money" to buy that beachfront electronic real estate from the government. Instead, broadcasters lobbied hard to persuade lawmakers of both parties to simply hand it over. Thierer calls that "one of the most unjustifiable giveaways and biggest boondoggles in American history. You have to count it as the greatest victory the NAB ever had."

Eddie Fritts, through a spokesperson, declined a request to be interviewed about the secret of NAB's success through the years, or the lobby's position on the free-airtime issue, or anything else. NAB did, however, provide CJR with a packet of editorials, columns, and op-ed pieces condemning free airtime as a terrible idea. "Constitutionally problematic" — George Will, *Newsweek*. "Could be the last stand by broadcasters to keep at least some of their core First

Amendment rights." — Nat Hentoff, *The Washington Post*. "It is a fallacy that TV broadcasters, because they are licensed by the government, have an obligation to serve the public." — Jeff Jacoby, *Boston Globe*.

Shaun Sheehan, a Tribune Company vice-president and lobbyist in Washington, is candid about his own employers' attitude on free airtime, which mirrors the NAB's. "We have a responsibility to present the candidates to our viewers," he says, "but we resist the notion of federal mandates, which could lead to a manipulation of the process and probably not be healthy for democracy." Sheehan correctly points out that most incumbent candidates don't want free airtime because it gives challengers exposure they otherwise wouldn't get; and because office-holders can't control the content of such airtime, especially if journalists are there asking them hard questions. In paid thirty-second political ads, which incumbents can afford far better than challengers, candidates can "call the other guy a bastard," without fear of refutation, says Sheehan.

A former FCC chairman in the Clinton administration, Reed Hundt, calls television "the mother's milk of politics, the essential nurturing element," and he argues against the current system, which is funded heavily by fat cats. Until there's a major amount of campaign airtime that isn't bought by special-interest money, he insists, democracy is being hijacked by those special-interest bank accounts. "There's not a shred of justifica-

tion," he adds, for broadcasters to claim there's something unfair, unwise, or unconstitutional about mandating use of the airwaves for public debate.

What's the morning line on free airtime's prospects in Washington? If you're an optimist about its chances, two bucks would probably win you a hundred. Republican congressman W.J. "Billy" Tauzin of Louisiana, chairman of the House Energy and Commerce committee, is a staunch partisan of the NAB and can be expected to pronounce the bill dead-on-arrival. It's "unfair, it's unconstitutional, and it won't solve the problem of campaign finance reform," he wrote in *Roll Call* in 1997. Tauzin's aide, Ken Johnson, told *Broadcasting & Cable* recently, "Senator McCain is a patriot and a great American, but if his bill hits the House, we'll be playing Taps for it." Charles Lewis, executive director of the Center for Public Integrity, says: "I hate to put it crudely, but Tauzin has been in the broadcast industry's pocket for years." In the 1997-2000 period, according to a center study, Tauzin, his family, and his staff had lapped the field among the leading recipients of media industry freebie junkets: forty-two of them at a cost of \$77,389.

But the real source of NAB's phenomenal influence in Washington is not its financing of free trips for complaisant legislators, or even its copious contributions (\$710,677 in 2000) to both parties, or its planting of op-ed pieces, or long lunches at the Palm with Washington power bro-

BUYING THE AIRWAVES

"Today's Senate campaigns function as collection agencies for broadcasters," former Democratic Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey once remarked. "You simply transfer money from contributors to television stations." The 2000 Senate campaign proves Bradley's point. More than half of all campaign expenditures went for broadcast commercials. Leading the pack was Democrat Zell Miller of Georgia who spent more than 75 percent of his funds (\$1.9 million) that way.

Typically, the candidate who spent the most money on broadcasting won. In New Jersey, Democrat Jon Corzine lavished an astonishing \$40 million on broadcast ads, or 63.3 percent of his record-high \$63 million campaign.

In New York, on the other hand, Republican Representative Rick Lazio not only spent more money overall than Hillary Clinton (\$43 million to \$29.6 million) but also outspent her on campaign commercials (\$21 million to \$16.5 million). But Clinton's successful strategy had her spending a far higher percentage of her war chest on broadcasting — 55.8 percent to only 48.6 percent for Lazio.

Candidates need to raise huge sums (often from special-interest pleaders, as well as from the public) to buy time on the public's own airwaves. A modicum of free airtime, its advocates contend, would help reduce that need, and thus the power of special-interest money over the politicians who make our laws. — N.H.

kers. More important is its members' presence in virtually every congressional district in the nation, and the perceived power of those television and radio stations to shape the news and control how issues that affect their own destiny get covered. (In a 1995 speech, Eddie Fritts declared: "No one has more sway with members of Congress than the local broadcaster.")

Broadcasters are the "dominant mechanism that the public uses to get news," says Gene Kimmelman, co-director of Consumers Union's Washington office. "They control the imagery of what people learn about public officials. They can show a candidate picking his nose, his hair blowing the wrong way, making a funny face or a silly comment. They can make you look like a fool or a brilliant politician."

Or worse, they can simply ignore you. "Who wants to be blacklisted nationwide by the broadcast industry?" says Charles Lewis. "If you're a politician, you might as well start packing your bags, because it's all over." The industry's power is subtle, he says. "It's a sledgehammer, which everyone knows is sitting there waiting to be used. No one actually needs to lift it." News directors at TV and radio stations often intuit their bosses' wishes about how to cover particular candidates and behave accordingly.

The broadcast lobby is like the Wizard of Oz, pulling levers behind the curtain, says Reed Hundt. "They're against anything the Congress might do to urge them to do good. I can think of no example to the contrary." If Emmys were awarded for lobbying, Hundt says, the NAB top brass would win every year.

Scott Harshbarger, president of Common Cause, says the NAB regularly hauls out its heavy guns when public-interest issues collide with broadcasters' capacity to earn profits; and that free airtime is "a classic example of their making it crystal clear that this will happen only over their dead bodies." But it's really not the NAB's power he is criticizing, Harshbarger says. The association is entitled — indeed obligated — like any high-powered Washington lobby, to defend its members' interests with vigor. "What we're saying is that citizens have a special claim on them because they have a public franchise that they're using for profiteering. But they want to dictate the terms by which the public can make demands on them. It's the public's airwaves they are monopolizing." In the free-airtime debate, he says, NAB is using its power to frustrate "a legitimate, fair, responsible

DOYLE MCMANUS



Washington bureau chief, *Los Angeles Times*; panelist, *Washington Week*

"I arrived in Washington in 1983 when the cold war was still in full swing. There was a sustained shift of attention in Washington coverage from the cold-war pattern — where foreign policy and national security were a central mission — to a much more domestic focus. The post-cold-war decade arguably came to an end on September 11, and what we saw during the 1990s were a lot of questions about whether Washington coverage was still important.

"Our key stories in the late '90s — when we weren't being interrupted by scandals — were the economy, health care, education, the quality of American life, family issues. Washington bureaus did not shrink during the '90s. Surprisingly, Washington reporting ended up being just as important to editors of the country's major newspapers as it had during the cold war. September 11 flipped the priorities again, from those domestic issues back to national security.

"On *Washington Week*, the subject matter has also shifted. It was not until this past June that we had a session that did not have a foreign-policy or defense segment. For the first eight months or so after September 11, the show was almost all foreign policy. Now corporate reform and the economy have roared back as topic A. We have more news going than we have reporters to cover it.

"I think there was a general feeling last summer, when Gary Condit was topic A, that we were hitting some kind of bottom. We weren't covering it the way tabloid television was, but still it did not feel like the kind of story that most of us came to Washington to work on. We were in danger of being defined as people who cover the personal problems of politicians who fall from grace. There is a kind of relief — and here, please save me from sounding as though I'm happy we're at war — that we are now working on stories of genuine merit and importance."

step toward improving the quality of democracy, and that's unfortunate."

No deep mystery surrounds the rationale for NAB's position on free airtime. The industry earned a billion dollars in political advertising in the 2000 election period, so why give away what you can sell? That goes unstated by NAB, however, in favor of the association's habitual appeal to the First Amendment (an argument unavailable to other mammoth lobbies: health care, defense, airlines). Whenever legislators or consumer advocates attempt to impose public-interest obligations, the broadcasters condemn the effort as unconstitutional meddling in their editorial affairs.

In response, the other side points for the hundredth time to the 1969 Supreme Court decision in *Red Lion v. Federal Communications Commission*, for which Justice Byron White wrote the court's seven-to-zero unanimous decision, cherished by anti-NAB forces everywhere: "It is the right of the viewers and listeners, not the right of the broadcasters, which is paramount."

The Radio-Television News Directors Association is an ally of NAB on the mandated free-airtime issue. Barbara Cochran, president of RTNDA, thinks the proposal has "unintended, extremely dangerous consequences" and is an "unconstitutional infringement on the editorial discretion of the individual stations."

In dueling polls, NAB/RTNDA and the Alliance for Better Campaigns offered differing figures about the public's appetite for free airtime. In 2000 more than half of voters (54 percent) in five Super Tuesday primary states were against mandated free airtime, according to the NAB/RTNDA tally. Supporting the idea: only 34 percent. An independent Pew Research Center study trumpeted by the alliance, on the other hand, had 73 percent in favor and only 20 percent opposed. (The same Pew poll found that only 31 percent of Americans know that the public owns the airwaves.)

Similarly, the alliance touts figures showing that broadcasters are offering less and less political coverage: In 2000 ABC, CBS, and NBC nightly newscasts had 28 percent less campaign coverage than in 1988, and coverage of the two national conventions was down two-thirds in the same period; presidential candidate sound bites lasted forty-three seconds in 1968 and 7.8 seconds in 2000. Meanwhile, NAB/RTNDA had evidence that more than 85 percent of key Super

Tuesday voters thought there was "too much" or the "right amount" of primary election reporting in 2000.

Says an NAB partisan who spoke to CJR on condition of being identified only as "a broadcast industry source": "I think we take our public-interest obligations seriously. Just as the government does not dictate the number of pages in your magazine, we don't think the government has a role in dictating program content. It's a pure First Amendment issue."

Is the NAB the most powerful lobby in Washington?

"I'm not going to comment on that."

What's a good example of broadcasters doing public service?

"Look what happened on 9/11 when stations, day after day, in the midst of the worst advertising recession since World War II, provided blanket coverage, radio and television, forgoing tens of millions of dollars of revenue. Does that not count for something?"

And besides that, says the "broadcast industry source," TV and radio news gives plenty of free airtime to politicians on regular news and interview programs. "Our polling shows that most people think broadcasters do a damned good job of covering politics." What he calls a "small segment of Washington insiders" think otherwise, but folks in "real-life America" aren't clamoring to see and hear more politicians.

In June NAB released figures claiming that broadcasters should get credit for \$9.9 billion worth of public service in 2001, thanks to free PSAs (public service announcements), and money raised for charity and disaster relief. That makes broadcasters "the number one provider of public service in America," said Eddie Fritts in a press release.

A handful of broadcast groups have, in fact, stepped up to the plate and volunteered time to candidates in the 2002 elections: *The New York Times*, which owns eight television stations, along with Hearst-Argyle Television, and E.W. Scripps.

But the irreconcilable has become no more reconcilable: broadcasters — abetted by friends and dependents in Congress — doggedly, effectively defending turf of which they are custodians, not owners; and activists struggling, usually to little effect, to claim for the public what they deem is its electronic birthright.

The goal of securing free time for candidates goes back to the pre-TV era. Frank Knox, the 1936 Republican nominee for

ED HENRY

Editor, *Roll Call*



DOUGLAS GRANATA

"For a few years before 9/11, there was a lot of reassessment by the public and the press about how relevant Washington was. Even before Monica, during the 1994 elections, Bill Clinton was having to say that the presidency was still relevant to what was going on. If you think back that far, people were paying increasingly less attention to the president and to Congress. It didn't really matter what Washington was doing, especially in the go-go nineties when Washington coverage took a back seat to Wall Street coverage. A lot of people were watching CNBC instead of C-SPAN in order to keep an eye on their stocks. People on Wall Street were telling Washington: Stay out. We're the geniuses who are running this new economy and we don't need any intervention from Washington."

"Well now, all of a sudden, Wall Street needs a lot of intervention from Washington, so the government is relevant again, and so the journalists who are covering it are more relevant than they were a few years ago. As Congress has reassessed its own priorities, we in the press have reassessed how we cover it. Congress is more important now because it's dealing with such crucial issues as whether or not we're going to invade Iraq, and setting up the department of Homeland Security, which is a huge restructuring of government. So those are stories we've been covering."

"The press in Washington has been making an attempt to be more serious. Nine-one-one was a reality check and made all of us in the press re-examine our priorities. That's only natural: a few years ago we were all writing about sex with interns, including all that embarrassing amount of coverage of the Gary Condit situation, leading right up to 9/11. I don't think there's a vast difference in how we work now, but we all realize, especially in the congressional press corps, that we've got to get back to the bread-and-butter issues."

vice president, suggested that the two parties be given radio airtime so that "both sides of all issues be fairly and adequately presented to the people." NAB, founded in 1922, has been unrelenting in its opposition. NAB's operating budget is now \$48 million. Its annual convention (this year's, in Las Vegas, drew 74,000 participants) is one of the world's largest trade group meetings, dutifully attended by the chairpersons of important congressional committees and FCC commissioners. In 2000 and 2001 it spent \$11.14 million on lobbying for various issues, according to the Center for Public Integrity.

A few media experts contend that the legendary power of NAB is on the wane. "Over-the-air broadcasting is a dinosaur," says Norman Ornstein. "It's not going to last very long." The spectrum giveaway was "one of the most colossally bad decisions made in the public interest in the last fifty years" because 77 percent of viewers already get their TV pictures via cable or satellite.

NAB is showing a few signs of coming apart at the seams. Three networks — CBS, NBC, and Fox, along with their owned-and-operated stations (fifty-one of them, in total) — have quit the associ-

ation in a nasty disagreement over the limit on how many stations a network can own. (NAB wants the FCC to retain the current limit in deference to the wishes of its independent, nonaffiliated station members; the three defecting networks want to push the FCC to expand it because they're eager to buy up more stations.) Since the disagreement is about that one issue, says our "broadcast industry source," the three networks will probably be back in the fold when it's resolved.

Realistically, NAB's influence is virtually undiminished. Negotiation is not their style, says Blair Levin, former FCC chief of staff. Their primary tactic is to kill unwelcome initiatives outright whenever they can. "They don't want to credit the notion that owning a broadcast license commits them to any concrete action." Cato's Adam Thierer puts it more sternly: "They spend more time wooing policymakers than they do worrying about consumers, and they have benefited wildly from that little calculus," he says. "You have to be impressed by their success, even if you're disgusted by it. And I am." ■

Neil Hickey is CJR's editor at large.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM SCHOOL

How To Follow the Money Now



BY MICHAEL SCHERER

To understand the future of political money in America, consider the tales of two high-flying political donors: the glitzy television producer responsible for the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* and the glamorous actress who gave us *Barbarella*.

Earlier this year, Haim Saban, the producer, cut a \$7-million check to the national Democratic Party. After Democrats disclosed the gift to the Federal Election Commission, *The New York Times* put it on page one, trumpeting it as the "largest known donation in the history of American politics."

Jane Fonda, the actress, had a different experience. She gave \$11.7 million just weeks before the 2000 presidential election. Though her contribution was larger, she chose a less obvious route, avoiding the FEC. As a result, the major newspapers missed the story. The networks never buzzed with the news.

Fonda's money, split into two checks over two weeks, went to Pro Choice Vote, a tax-exempt political nonprofit, called a 527 after its section of the tax code. Internal Revenue Service records, which few reporters examine, show that

Pro Choice Vote promptly redistributed most of her money to the accounts of three other pro-choice groups. In a matter of days, Fonda's millions had been separated from her name, free to be used for everything from televised issue advertising to mass mailings and voter mobilization.

Under the new campaign finance law, Saban's contribution, a so-called soft-money contribution that was disclosed in plain sight to the FEC, will be outlawed. But nothing will keep wealthy individuals like Fonda, corporations, or labor unions from writing even larger unregulated checks to 527s and other nonprofits. And that's just one of the ways more money will go, now that national parties can no longer collect unregulated contributions. With the weeks ticking down to November 6, when the new law takes effect, the old hydraulic metaphor of political money is poised to prove itself again: Try to block a flood of dollars with new regulations and the money, like water, always finds a way (see "The New Rules," page 56). In the coming era of campaign finance, following the flow will be tougher.

"This new law is going to increase the challenge for reporters," explains Kenneth A. Gross, a former FEC lawyer who advises candidates and Fortune 500 corporations. "With respect to disclosure, it will to some extent have the opposite effect than was intended."

The probable new routes are myriad and evolving, dependent on future judicial rulings and a bitterly disputed FEC rulemaking process. But for reporters hoping to keep abreast of the shifting landscape, most observers agree on three broad areas to watch:

- State political parties will find them-

selves bombarded with new money and responsibility.

- Partisan nonprofits and interest groups will shove themselves into the spotlight.

- And grass-roots organizing, mass mailings, and phone banks — the sort of activity that isn't regulated by the FEC, the IRS, or the Federal Communication Commission — will increasingly become weapons of choice.

None of these sources of political cash will be easy to track. "You are dealing with a sophisticated political community," says Larry Noble, a former FEC general counsel who now runs the Center for Responsive Politics. "There is going to be a lot of smoke and a lot of fire."

THE REBORN STATE AND LOCAL PARTIES

At first glance, the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act appears to cut off unregulated donations that state or local parties can use for federal campaigns. But appearances can be deceiving. After all, this "bipartisan" bill was promptly challenged in court by both Democrats and Republicans.

In a series of highly contested rulings in June, a divided Federal Election Commission began defining the terms of the new law in ways that opened new loopholes for unregulated donors. This means waves of unregulated political money will still flow to the local level, and then flow up the political ladder. More important, many contributions will be reported only in forms filed with harder-to-track state agencies, says Dwight L. Morris, a campaign finance consultant to many major media organizations. "This is going to create a lot more confusion and problems than it will solve," said Morris. Many

states, he says, don't require donors to list their occupations or even a street address.

Even before the new law took effect, during the 2000 presidential campaign, state political parties independently collected nearly \$307 million, compared to the \$500 million in soft money collected by the national parties. The media never have tracked many of the state contributions, allowing large donors like AT&T, Philip Morris, and the National Education Association to pass quietly under the radar.

The new rules are complicated, as loopholes often are. Paul Sanford, the director of FEC Watch, says state and local parties, for instance, can continue to use soft money under the new law for many administrative expenses that benefit federal candidates — some staff salaries, Internet communication, office supplies, rent, and building utilities. The parties can also use unregulated funds for “generic campaign activity” and “get out the vote” efforts that come before the last day federal candidates have to file for the primary. This means many state parties could use soft money for issue advertising, the sort that so infuriated reformers, early in the campaign season.

After the filing deadline, many of these same activities can be paid for with so-called Levin funds, a new category of campaign money that state and local parties can collect in \$10,000 chunks. There is no limit on how many local party committees could collect this money, so there is likely to be a profusion of such committees down to the precinct level. (Unlike some of the party soft money, though, the Levin funds will be reported to the FEC.)

THE INTEREST-GROUP EXPLOSION

Reporters should also expect party officials and former political aides to establish new “Astroturf” organizations — fake grassroots groups that can collect and spend unregulated volumes of money as long as they do not explicitly advocate the election or defeat of a candidate. Founded in the past by labor unions, corporations, and wealthy individuals, these groups invariably come with names like Republicans for Clean Air, American Family Voices, or The United Senior Association. But the names mean little or nothing.



For reporters like *The Washington Post's* Jim VandeHei, who covers Congress, they are a constant source of stories — and aggravation. The financial backers of Astroturf often hide behind limited disclosure requirements, obscure post-office boxes, and tight-lipped consultants. “A lot of these things are set up by the same people,” VandeHei said. “They know they can get away with it.”

The new law barely regulates independent organizations like labor unions, trade associations, 527s like Pro Choice Vote, and issue-oriented groups like the Sierra Club and the National Rifle Association. These groups are all free to expand without limits. Already, fundraising by 527s is exploding, with the fifty most active of them raising nearly \$11 million in just the first three months of 2002. If the fundraising pace continues, that will amount to a 52 percent increase in more than a year, according to a report by Public Citizen.

The good news is that reporters can crack the outer walls of disclosure if they know where to look. It was the media, after all, that helped uncover Republicans for Clean Air as a front for a Texas energy executive, American Family Voices as the project of a former aide to Bill Clinton, and The United Senior Association as a repository of drug company dollars.

Marianne Holt, who tracked interest groups in 2000 for the Center for Public Integrity, says she often began her investigations by electronically searching for the groups' names under incorporation records. These are filed with state governments, but can often be accessed

through database services like WestLaw and Lexis-Nexis. If the group had taken out television ads, then she went to television stations to review public files, which by law contain basic information on the groups' identity. “That is sometimes a launching pad to figuring out who is active and what is going on,” says Holt, who now directs the Campaign and Media Legal Center.

The Internal Revenue Service can also be a treasure trove of information for secretive groups. If a group is incorporated as a 527, it must make public filings to the IRS, including detailed lists of contributors and expenditures, which are then posted on the IRS Web site. If the group is incorporated as a 501(c) organization — which includes charities, schools, unions, trade groups, and some lobbying organizations — reporters can request the group's annual tax return, or Form 990, from the group itself. The tax return does not offer names of contributors, but it does list top officers and basic balance-sheet information.

In recent years, groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce have exploited the 501(c) loophole, concealing the sources of millions of dollars in political spending under its nonprofit umbrella. Such tactics require reporting that goes beyond public documents.

“There are still people out there who still think that some things are crossing the line,” explains the *Post's* VandeHei. Last year, one of those people handed him a list of contributors to many of the chamber's political television campaigns, exposing public companies like



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Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Merck, and Bristol Myers Squibb as million-dollar donors. It was the sort of scoop that public records rarely provide.

OFF THE AIRWAVES, INTO THE STREETS

Public records are also of little help when it comes to tracking grass-roots organizing. The AFL-CIO, for example, spent a whopping \$40 million on the 2000 elections, but less than 25 percent of that went to television advertising. Roughly \$770,000 went to national Democratic Party committees as soft money. Where did the rest go?

A study by the Campaign Finance Institute found that during the campaign, organized labor hired more than a 1,000-person staff, distributed fourteen million pieces of mail, and placed eight million phone calls. Such tactics appear to work: though only 13.5 percent of workers have union jobs, 26 percent of voters in 2000 came from union households. Business groups, learning from their opponents, have also begun redirecting their resources. "We learned that we have to get more employers talking with employees out in the field where it counts," says Greg Casey, the president of the Business-Industry Political Action Committee, which has substantially shifted its efforts toward grass-roots organizing in recent years.

If upheld by the courts, one provision of the new law could accelerate this shift

— by banning certain broadcast advertisements paid for with unregulated donations in the weeks leading up to an election. This will increase the importance of direct mail, telephone solicitation, person-to-person contact, and other forms of outreach — all of which cost money. Almost none of this spending is disclosed to the FEC.

"It's going to be important to follow what is happening on the ground level in contested districts," says Michael J. Malbin, executive director of the Campaign Finance Institute. He suggests keeping tabs on politicians' speaking schedules, since such engagements often yield support through back channels like direct mail. (According to one study, campaign spending on direct mail exceeded \$3 billion between 1992 and 1997.) Malbin also recommends that reporters get on mailing lists by subscribing to magazines like *National Review* or *The Nation*, or on the contact lists of local political parties. "Have some way to keep track of these things," he says.

His point is clear. In the future of political campaigns, activities that reporters have long neglected will become increasingly important, as will the corporations, unions, and wealthy benefactors who support those efforts. "Reporters have to get beyond the horserace and beyond the disclosed numbers," says Malbin. "You have to go beyond the usual disclosure sources." ■

Michael Scherer is an assistant editor at CJR.

THE NEW RULES

It runs more than 15,000 words, but the heart of the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act is in the following major provisions:

SOFT MONEY: National political parties will no longer be able to collect "soft money," the large unregulated contributions from corporations, labor unions, and wealthy individuals. But state and local parties will be able to collect checks as high as \$10,000 from these groups for use in voter registration and get-out-the-vote activities during federal campaigns. State and local parties can also continue to use soft money for some other activities that benefit federal candidates.

HARD MONEY: Individuals can give each candidate for the presidency, the House, and the Senate up to \$2,000 per election (including primaries), twice as much as previously allowed. The limits on the total amount of hard money individuals can give during a single election cycle also rise. This will increase the importance of lobbyists and other "bundlers" who can collect checks from large numbers of wealthy people.

ISSUE ADVERTISING: Incorporated interest groups will not be able to use unregulated money to purchase broadcast advertising that uses the name or likeness of a candidate within thirty days of a primary election or sixty days of a general election. This ban does not affect non-broadcast communications, like direct mail, Internet communication, phone banks, or print advertising.

— M.S.

THE INVISIBLE AGENCIES

They Keep Fading, and 9/11 Didn't Help



BY TRUDY LIEBERMAN

I know one thing. I'm not going to be covering any of those dreary regulatory agencies.

— Maureen Dowd, of *The New York Times*, in Edwin Diamond's book, *Behind the Times*.

You and your family, not to mention your readers and viewers, probably eat chicken. But you and they may not know that the roaster you toss on the grill could harbor drug-resistant bacteria that could make you sick with an illness that's becoming hard to treat.

Or that that bologna and those hot dogs neatly stacked in the supermarket cooler might be tainted with listeria, a deadly bacterium that survives refrigeration. Or that the Department of Agriculture has yet to enact a rule that would make either of those foods safer.

Alarming revelations for sure. But covering regulation has never been high on Washington media's Prestige-O-Meter, and it has barely sounded the alarm. What the government does to safeguard the food supply, as well as the cars we drive, the air we breathe, the place we work, and the water we drink are subjects that have always taken a backseat to more glamorous beats like the White House, the State Department, or the Pentagon.

But in recent years — and even more since 9/11 — the agencies have moved further off the radar scope. "Ninety percent

of Washington reporters have no clue where those agencies are even located," says James Warren, former Washington bureau chief for the *Chicago Tribune*.

Yet to most ordinary folks what Ari Fleischer said last night about the president's latest trip is not as important as the possibility that their kids might eat contaminated food at the local fast-food restaurant. Why don't more reporters and editors see the agencies for what they are — a fertile field of stories to be harvested and shared with a public that cares plenty about its own health and safety?

Sometimes government keeps a close eye on the regulated businesses; at other times it hardly pays attention. Media interest has also ebbed and flowed, often in tandem with the reigning Washington political thought.

Which is unfortunate. "The only hope of making the agencies work better is for the press to cover them and expose what is happening," says *The Washington Monthly's* founder, Charles Peters (see page 60). "They will improve when the fear of exposing them outweighs the influence of the lobbyists."

One way to cover regulation is to cover congressional oversight of it, says Morton Mintz, a former *Washington Post* reporter known for aggressive coverage of the agencies. But now he says, "The hearings aren't there to be covered." Instead of months of hearings on drug safety or drug industry profits, Mintz says, members of Congress today are more likely to ask why the Food and Drug Administration isn't approving new drugs faster.

In the heyday of strong congressional oversight, journalists worked closely with congressional staff people to break important stories about questionable business practices and what the agencies were doing to curb them. "We were aided and abetted by members of Congress who had a killer instinct and a feel for the issues," says Saul Friedman, who covered

Washington for the *Detroit Free Press* and is now a columnist at *Newsday*. "There was a symbiosis between young newspaper people and members of Congress who cared. The symbiosis and the gut instincts are just no longer there."

They may be victims of a changing journalistic culture. "With government regulatory issues, there's no time bomb, no explosion, no sex, no intrigue," says former Senator David Pryor of Arkansas. With no finale, no fat lady singing, the media have less interest.

Sometimes the story is about what is not happening — and "it's hard to stir up reporting over inaction," says Dr. Ellen Silbergeld, a professor at the University of Maryland who has been involved in environmental regulatory issues over the years. "How much excitement can you get over another review of dioxin?" The real story, however, is not just "another review" but why an agency is sitting on some rule or regulation and what happens to the public while it sits.

Meanwhile, watchdog groups that monitor the agencies say that enthusiasm these days from the press for what they uncover has waned. One example is the increasing use of cost-benefit analysis to evaluate proposed rules and regulations. Such analysis often involves assumptions and analytical tools that are open to question, such as weighing health or safety benefits in the future (decreased cancer from clean water, for example) as less important than saving money today. According to Reece Rushing, a senior policy analyst at OMB Watch, a public interest watchdog group, the Bush administration is relying more and more on cost-benefit analysis to determine which regulations get adopted, but the press is not interested, so the public is clueless about the issue. "All the players are involved — the business community, the public interest lobbyists, the think tanks," he says. "It's a big-ticket item for everyone but the media."

Danielle Brian, who heads another watchdog group, the Project on Government Oversight (POGO), says she tried for six years to interest mainstream media in writing about how the oil companies were cheating the government out of royalties for extracting oil from public lands. The government was losing some \$70 million annually, she says, because the industry was paying a price it had arbitrarily set rather than the fair market value.

The mainstream media finally sniffed a story only after a political brouhaha surfaced. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas, looking out for her home-state constituents, tried to block an Interior Department regulation ordering the oil companies to pay the fair market value. She attached a rider to a bill, which would have withheld money the department needed to implement the regulation. When Senator Barbara Boxer of California announced she would oppose Hutchison's rider, reporters sensed a political fight and the story became news — editorials and news stories in publications like *The Washington Post*, *Business Week*, and on *ABC World News Tonight*.

Today, reporters don't have time to do the groundwork or dig out the context, Brian says. Instead of merely handing them a document and pointing reporters in the direction of a good story, POGO now packages the story into a report complete with executive summaries and press releases. Everything is spelled out.

Reporting on the regulatory beat, of course, is hard. It requires a reporter to know science, law, administrative procedure, and politics. Journalists must understand the industry in question and the subtleties of regulation — what's proposed, what the regulated industries prefer, and how the public will be affected. Learning all this takes time. Where once reporters like George Anthon, who covered food safety regulations for the *Des Moines Register*, could spend weeks plowing through stacks of inspection records at the Department of Agriculture, reporters now tend to want and need something quick and dirty.

Bureau chiefs are candid about the problems they face in freeing up reporters to spend weeks at a regulatory agency. They also know they are missing good stories if they don't. "It takes real fortitude for a bureau chief to pull a reporter away from daily news and say

JUDY WOODRUFF



Anchor, CNN

"If you use September 11 as the demarcation line, there's no question that we all got a whole lot more patriotic — not that we weren't patriotic

before, but in terms of our consciousness of being Americans. For a time we were more deferential to organized government in this country. The press and public were overcome with the idea that for the first time in our lifetime the U.S. was vulnerable in a significant way.

"For me, as the anchor of a political show, the effect was immediate. *Inside Politics* disappeared from September 11 to January. The feeling at CNN was that 9/11 was overwhelming, the threat to the U.S. was huge. Partisan politics took a back seat to Afghanistan, al Qaeda, and Osama bin Laden. It was quite some time before we covered anything else.

"Then Enron rolled around in November, and the economy became the story we're focused on. The war on terrorism is still very much out there but it doesn't seem to be as immediate a threat as people felt it was before, at least if you look at the polls.

"The closest comparison is with Bush One, where for a time the gulf war was the only story on our radar screen, and then, lo and behold, the economy started to dip and people began feeling some pain."

there's a larger, more important story that no one else will get but you," says Andy Alexander, the bureau chief for Cox Newspapers. Alexander's bureau of nine reporters must report Washington news for seventeen newspapers, all of which may have different regional interests on any given day. Same story at Scripps Howard, where bureau chief Peter Copeland notes that the newshole for Washington and regulatory coverage has been steadily shrinking.

Maybe that explains why some of the best reporting on the regulatory beat is done by trade-press reporters, whose job it is to accurately report the nuances of regulation for the regulated industries that have profits riding on the agency deci-

sions. For example, Allison Beers, who recently left her post as managing editor of *Food Chemical News*, became an expert on the workings of the Department of Agriculture when she was covering food safety regulation, and her stories stand out. "People who cover my area tend to cover the big things — a court case, something the secretary of agriculture said. But if it is some directive the government quietly issued to its inspection force, who's going to pick that up?" she asks.

Who, indeed? Productivity pressures encourage reporters to wait for the soundbite or press release, build a one-day story, and move on. There's little to encourage a reporter to hang around an agency, cultivate sources, and learn complex issues that some day might turn into a story. "We cover agencies depending on what they have to say," admits Sandy Johnson, the AP's Washington bureau chief.

Over at the FDA, the public affairs officer Lawrence Bachorik says that more often than not, stories about the FDA originate in his agency. "We are making the news," he says. But if the agencies control what is covered and feed journalists only the stories they want told, and journalists come to rely on their handouts, where will the public get the real story?

The traditional way of thinking about the agencies as discrete beats may be outdated in today's complex scientific and legal environment, and a new way of looking at the issues may be in order. "We need to figure out a way to cover regulation more exhaustively and more creatively," says William Serrin, a professor of journalism at New York University. "Not just the Pentagon but the military; not just the IRS but taxes; not just the FDA but food safety."

There is a glimmer of hope. A few bureau chiefs say they are starting to look at regulation in a more global way. Copeland of Scripps Howard notes that his bureau has carved out areas that encompass several regulatory agencies — the environment, which he says they have defined to mean sprawl, education, and health. "We decided to become centers of excellence in those topics," he says. John Walcott, the new bureau chief at Knight Ridder, says the bureau's new investigative team "will be sniffing out things at the regulatory agencies."

Changing the priorities, though, may

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: TWO CASE STUDIES

If food safety regulation, which is vital to every American, is not reported well, what can be said about less tangible and more arcane subjects like pipeline safety or company pension plans? CJR looked at how the media have covered two food-safety issues over the last few years. We found significant gaps in coverage, and with few exceptions, little enterprise reporting or explanation of what an action or lack of one means to ordinary people.

CASE #1: FLUOROQUINOLONES

In the mid 1990s, over the objections of the Centers for Disease Control, the FDA gave the okay for poultry growers to treat their flocks with antibiotics called fluoroquinolones. If one bird caught pneumonia, the rest of the flock was at risk, so growers wanted permission to add low doses of antibiotics to chickens' drinking water as a preventive measure. At the time, the head of the CDC, Dr. David Satcher, argued that the widespread use of fluoroquinolones in animals "will hasten the emergence of resistance, especially in bacteria transmitted by food." That is exactly what happened.

Each year more than two million people get food poisoning from campylobacter, a bug transmitted through undercooked chicken and chicken juices dripping onto other foods. Doctors typically prescribe fluoroquinolones to treat the infections. But increasingly those drugs don't work. Ten years ago the drugs did not work in one of 100 people with campylobacter infections. By 1999 they didn't work in one of six people who contracted the illness. Eighty percent of all chickens are now contaminated with campylobacter, and 25 percent of those carry a drug-resistant form of the bug, according to the FDA.

The FDA now wants to ban the use of fluoroquinolones in poultry. One manufacturer, Abbott Laboratories, voluntarily took its drug off the market, several fast-food chains have stopped buying chickens treated with fluoroquinolones, and some growers have switched to other drugs. But the other major manufacturer, Bayer, is fighting the FDA.

The coverage? For the most part, the media have ignored this looming public health hazard. In 1995 when the FDA gave the green light to chicken growers, the media did not report on the FDA's announcement, its ramifications, or the warnings of the CDC. None of the twenty-eight large papers and forty-four small papers in six states in our Lexis-Nexis sample explored the issues of drug-resistance and the link between feeding antibiotics to chickens and treating humans. In 1999 there was spotty coverage when an alarming study, reported in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, examined increasing drug resistance in Minnesota. Still, in our sample, only eight papers, large and small, reported on the study.

The FDA's proposed ban on fluoroquinolones and the regulatory fight between Bayer and the FDA have not generated much coverage, either. When the FDA proposed its ban in late 2000, the main-

stream media did not use the proposal or Bayer's decision to challenge FDA as a springboard for further investigation. The major networks covered the story as an announcement from a federal agency. So did a handful of newspapers, but in-depth explorations were missing. A notable exception to the overall dismal coverage has been NPR, which aired two excellent segments on the topic.

CASE #2: LISTERIA

Two major outbreaks of listeria poisoning have occurred in the last four years. Listeria illness, transmitted through food, often deli meats and unpasteurized soft cheeses, affects about 2,500 people each year, and some 500 of them will die. The most vulnerable are pregnant women, the elderly, cancer patients, and people with AIDS. The bacteria continue to grow under refrigeration so the government has warned those groups not to eat hot dogs or luncheon meats unless they are recooked. Yet the USDA requires no warning labels on packages of ready-to-serve meats.

The first outbreak, in late 1998, resulted from contaminated hot dogs produced by Bil Mar Foods, owned by Sara Lee. It caused twenty-one deaths and sickened 100. The second outbreak, in December 2000, involved deli meats produced by Cargill Inc. It caused four deaths and three miscarriages, and made twenty-two people very sick.

Both outbreaks involved recalls. The first, according to *The Washington Post*, which examined it in detail a year later, was the "quietest." Sara Lee voluntarily began the recall in December 1998, but food-safety advocates had trouble getting attention. Coverage picked up soon after the USDA made a public announcement a month later. Our sample shows twenty of the twenty-eight large newspapers as well as eight out of forty-four small papers carried stories about the first outbreak and recall. The second recall got less coverage.

But few stories connected the recalls with the need for tougher inspection rules. If Listeria is found in a cooked food product, it must be recalled. But there is no mandatory testing for the bacterium — only spot-checking of processed meats, which results in about two or three samples examined at each plant each year.

The Department of Agriculture proposed rules for mandatory testing that are opposed by the industry, which would have to remodel its postcooking processes to create a germ-free environment.

The Bush administration reversed course three times but ultimately asked for a second cost-benefit analysis, stalling the rules for at least another few years. None of this has merited serious attention in the media.

Although a few papers noted that the Bush administration was proceeding with public commentary, our Nexis search turned up no stories about the arguments over the rule or about the new delay in implementation. Nor did we find any stories in the last two years examining why the USDA has not required warning labels on ready-to-eat meats, a story that should be obvious.

mean changing the way Washington news is defined. Perhaps journalists should stop looking for the pegs, the hooks, the dramatic events, and begin finding ways to convey the subtlety of these topics and why they are important to the public. Perhaps when it

comes to the regulatory beat, we should take the lead in defining the news, as some bureaus are beginning to, rather than waiting for some agency to do it for us. When reporters focus on Washington's backwaters, it's amazing what they can find. ■

Trudy Lieberman is a contributing editor to CJR. Research assistance was provided by Felicia Mebane, assistant professor in the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

ETERNAL WASHINGTON

To Get the Real Stories, Know the Real City

BY CHARLES PETERS

There are some eternal truths that journalists need to understand about Washington and the way it works. Or perhaps I should say tendencies instead of truths, because these principles are seldom true all the time. And eternal could also be more modestly defined as the forty years I worked in Washington as a participant in and an observer of the institutions of government. But if the press is to play its role, it must understand the culture of Washington. There may be more guards around the White House and the Capitol since 9/11, but the cultural tendencies governing the city's behavior have hardly changed at all.

The first of these tendencies involves what I call make-believe. Memos are written, meetings are held, and legislation is passed, all to make the participants seem "concerned" and responsive but usually with little or no impact on the problems they are supposed to solve. I sometimes suspect that writing memos and attending meetings rank among Washington's most treasured rituals precisely because they give the appearance of action. Congress gives this appearance when bills are passed by one chamber but not the other or the House and the Senate pass different bills and fail to reconcile them. The net effect of all of that effort is zero. Perhaps the clearest examples of negligible impact are to be found in the regulatory agencies that are supposed to protect our health and safety and provide for economic fair play.

For example, since I have been in Washington it has been the custom, after air disasters, for Congress to pass laws requiring the FAA to act to protect the safety of air travel. Then Congress proceeds to weaken whatever regulation is proposed by demanding that the new rules not be implemented in a way that inconveniences the airlines. It remains to be seen whether this charade will be repeated with the new Transportation Safety Administration, but



I would not regard the prognosis as hopeful. Already there has been a cutback of the measures that were adopted after 9/11: continuous fighter protection over major cities has been canceled. The deadline for inspecting luggage will be pushed back a year. Of course, the original deadline may have been so unrealistic as to have been make-believe. *The Washington Post* reports that there are not air marshals on every flight into Ronald Reagan National Airport as promised. The fantasy of that promise is obvious from the fact that, as of 9/11, the total number of air marshals was only thirty-two.

A make-believe technique often employed by Congress is to establish an agency to do a job and then not give it the money needed to perform the assigned task. When it was discovered that used-car dealers were tampering with odometers, Congress passed a law requiring sellers to disclose the actual mileage a car had been driven. There are tens of thousands of used-car dealers, of course, but to enforce the new law, Congress gave the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration enough money to hire four new inspectors.

Similarly, the Securities and Exchange Commission has a staff of 340 to monitor reports of 15,000 publicly held corporations, many of them giants capable of generating vast reams of paper. To deal with this mountain of work, according to *The*

Wall Street Journal, each staff member is required to analyze six reports a month. The temptation is to choose smaller companies and to place the voluminous filings of the corporate giants on the back burner. "Before Enron collapsed," reported the *Journal*, "its annual report hadn't been thoroughly examined since 1997." The Food and Drug Administration has fewer than 1,100 inspectors to inspect 120,000 plants, including those of multinational food conglomerates and giant pharmaceutical companies like Pfizer and Merck.

The difference between make-believe and real results comes down to implementation, but that is a word much of the press does not seem to understand. Since I am from West Virginia my favorite example is any mine safety bill. The media may take note of the committee hearings, of the bill's passage, and of the presidential signing ceremony. But few, if any, reporters go down into the mines to find out how the law is actually being implemented. Does it really improve mine safety or does it unduly burden mine owners? No one knows unless reporters find out the truth.

When the savings and loans were deregulated, how many journalists bothered to find out what they were doing with their new freedom? The answer is none, until it was too late, after financial scandals became unconcealable. The result was a federal bailout that cost taxpayers \$150 billion.

Or during the stock market's explosive growth in recent years, how many reporters asked if the SEC was effectively protecting investors against fraud and corporate manipulation? The honor roll is not long.

One of the reasons for the failure is the media's overall inattention to government outside the glamour beats — the White House, Congress, and the Supreme Court, as well as a few executive branches, including the Pentagon and the State Department. Most of the government is

pretty much ignored except by specialized newsletters that charge \$1,000 or more a year for reporting details that rich individuals and corporations need to know: the latest tax loophole or how to bid for a Pentagon contract.

Unfortunately, the agencies overlooked by the regular press are ones that have tremendously important roles in our lives — agencies responsible for the economy, medical care, our children's education, the safety and efficiency of transportation, protecting workers' health and safety, making sure taxes are collected fairly and efficiently and protecting the environment (see "Invisible Agencies," page 57). The FBI and the CIA do receive attention, but usually it comes only after the apprehension of an Aldrich Ames or after disasters like Ruby Ridge, Waco, or the monumental one, 9/11. Rarely does the press look at a government agency in a way that might enable it to predict and possibly prevent disasters, not to mention help the agency better serve the public interest.

A second major Washington tendency is the downward trend of the civil service. Although there are dedicated and talented exceptions, the overall quality of personnel has been steadily declining since the 1960s. Not since John Kennedy has any president referred to public service as a proud and noble calling. Various officials took a stab at this theme after the September 11 attacks, with their cheering of policemen, firemen, and the armed forces, but almost none made the larger point that public service in general matters. Recruiting for jobs in the civilian agencies is pathetically inadequate. Think of all the recruiting commercials you've seen for the military. How many have you seen for the civil service?

Another personnel problem is the near impossibility of firing poor performers. Theoretically, civil servants *can* be fired, but it takes a superior who is willing to devote a vast amount of time and attention to the task. That's why a transfer instead of dismissal was the reward for the four Immigration and Naturalization Service employees who issued student visas to Mohammed Atta and his pals months after 9/11.

A third major tendency of government agencies is to focus inward instead of on external responsibilities. The focus on the inside has some absurd consequences. Stanley Meisler of the *Los Angeles Times* once attended a country team meeting at the U.S. embassy in an African country

where the main subject of discussion was how to divide the latest shipment of Skippy peanut butter to the embassy store. A friend gave me a letter from a former colleague at the Agency for International Development mission in Saigon. The letter was written after North Vietnamese troops had launched the final attack, which led to our withdrawal from Vietnam six weeks later. The letter, however, was concerned solely with how office space was being allocated and how careers were being affected by the latest reorganizations.

Reorganizations are classic examples of both inward focus and make-believe. Sometimes the purpose is sensible, but often they are intended as a substitute for real action to meet real problems. Instead there is the appearance of action. Walls are knocked down, new partitions are constructed, desks are moved, and so are people. The real test is whether the agency can accomplish its mission better. In the case of Bush's Office of Homeland Security, will the different elements it comprises it get better? For example, simply moving the INS into the new agency will do no good unless attention is paid to making the enormous improvement INS needs.

The inward focus is accompanied by a tendency to think in terms not of what is best for the public interest, but of what is most convenient for those inside the government. On 9/11, according to *The Wall Street Journal's* David Cloud, the CIA's only agent assigned to Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, was spending half his time at his home in the Virginia countryside. Jerry M. Brown, a top official of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, left on vacation one day after the 1989 California earthquake when FEMA's manpower had already been strained to the limit by Hurricane Hugo just weeks earlier. His excuse: he had a nonreturnable airline ticket.

Yet the mention of FEMA is a reminder that something can be done about the unfortunate tendencies I have been describing. FEMA became a much better agency during the 1990s. This was because the media did a good job of reporting its failures, particularly after Hurricane Andrew in 1992. As a result of the media's attention, when Bill Clinton became president, he knew the agency had to be fixed, so he appointed James Lee Witt, a man he knew to be a talented administrator, to be FEMA's director. Witt turned the agency around. It went from being a disaster itself to being close to a model agency. It may

have declined since Witt left, but its story still provided heartening evidence that government can get better.

So government can work, but it is definitely not easy to make it work. For one thing, the political parties are major obstacles to reform. Democrats tend to be prisoners of the public employee unions, and to resist reform of the personnel system, especially any that might make it easier to fire poor performers. Far too many Republicans have adopted a simplistic antigovernment attitude, coupled with uncritical faith in free markets. This makes them less than eager to support efforts to make government more effective.

The press is our best hope. The media can bring out the best in the two political parties by continually exposing their worst tendencies, and by explaining who opposes reform and why. It can do the same for the rest of Washington by resolving not only to report what goes wrong but to explain *why* it went wrong. But this can be done only by reporters who try to understand our capital's culture, which is defined by certain common traits — such as the tendency to make believe — but which is divided into subcultures. The worlds of lobbyists, politicians and consultants, Congress, the White House, the civilian bureaucracy, the foreign services, the military, and the courts — all have their own distinct tendencies.

Thus the press needs an anthropological approach, the kind that is well established in business journalism. For years we have read about the internal culture of IBM or GE or, more recently, Enron. But despite *The Washington Monthly's* thirty-three year effort to promote it, the approach has barely gained a foothold among Washington journalists. What follow are a few examples to illustrate why this anthropological understanding is useful.

■ Why does the Army resist Donald Rumsfeld's plan to scrap its unwieldy 15,000-to-20,000-soldier divisions in favor of smaller units suitable to the kind of military actions characteristic of the present era? The reason is that the Army's whole rank-and-promotion system is based on unit size. A lieutenant commands a platoon, a captain a company, a major a battalion, a colonel a regiment, a brigadier general a brigade and a major-general a division. Similar considerations govern the Navy's bias in favor of supercarriers and

giant submarines and its legendary resistance to abandoning its battleships.

■ Why does the FBI have so much trouble connecting dots, like the warnings from Phoenix and Minneapolis field agents that terrorism suspects were learning how to fly big planes? One reason is that, within the culture of the FBI, the role of analysis has long been disdained. The analysts are seen as office-bound theorists, in contrast to the "real" agents in the field. Needless to say this attitude has not encouraged the agency's best and brightest to become analysts. The result is that the FBI is importing analysts from the CIA. This is like hiring the one-eyed to lead the blind, since a similar disdain, only not as severe, has long existed in the CIA's ranks.

■ Why do campaigns cost so much? Again there is an anthropological-economic factor. The media consultants who drive the campaigns are paid by commissions based on how much television time and other advertising is purchased by the campaign. This means that every dollar spent on the campaign increases the consultants' income. It is thus not puzzling that they are constantly whispering in the candidate's ear about the need for more TV spots.

■ Why did the media condemn Bill Clinton for inviting campaign donors to White House coffees and to spend the night in the Lincoln bedroom? They seemed to forget that every other president in memory invited big contributors to state dinners and other White House social events. The really *bad* thing for a president to do is alter a policy position or take an official action in return for a contribution. So good politicians are always looking for clean favors they can do for a donor. A social invitation is probably the most common. Clinton's pardon for Marc Rich, however, does not qualify as a social favor; it was an official act and thus deserved the condemnation it got from the press. But the media failed to understand the culture of politics well enough to perceive the difference between clean and dirty fundraising.

■ How do bureaucrats pull the wool over the eyes of Congress and the press? One way is the clever use of definitions. Washington's Department of Public Works is supposed to move abandoned cars from the streets. It says it moved 8,000 last year, but the actual figure was 4,225. The agency had counted not only cars moved from the streets but the cars it moved from one impoundment lot to another. During the gulf war the Pentagon counted a bombing mission as "successful" if

JUAN WILLIAMS



Senior correspondent, NPR; political analyst, Fox News

"There are still echoes of Vietnam in this town. The culture of Washington is surprisingly

militaristic. There are still people at the Pentagon who say it was the press that denigrated America's effort in Vietnam and led to that defeat. In the gulf war, they were very careful about what the press got to see. In this war effort, given the patriotic fervor surrounding it because of the attack on our soil, that attitude has prevailed.

"When the president went into the Treaty room in the White House on that Sunday morning in October 2001 to announce that we were going to start dropping bombs on Afghanistan, there were no reporters present to ask questions — just a single television camera and his communications aides. Afterwards, he didn't go out and talk to reporters. He apparently felt he could announce the start of the war on terrorism directly to the American people, and didn't need to deal with the press.

"The White House lately has been doing a somewhat better job in relations with the press. I think they understand, especially in the midst of all the latest crises, that reporters — as credible, trustworthy voices — can tell this story; and that the press has a role to play. And I think they're starting to acknowledge that the press has a legitimate function."

the plane had arrived at the target and the bombs were dropped, even if they missed the target by a country mile.

■ In what ways is the White House like the media? It pays little attention to the large areas of government that the press tends to ignore — unless, of course, the agency somehow gets in the news. There are several reasons for this. One is that the White House, when it's not pushing its own agenda, spends its time reacting to the news. Two recent examples: Before this year, the Bush administration's interest in regulatory reform or in mediating the Israeli-Palestinian dispute ranged from minimal to nonexistent. Only the series of stories about corporate scandal and about violence in the Middle East inspired the

White House to at least appear to be doing something about these problems.

Another reason the White House ignores government agencies is the conviction that changing these agencies will take so long that it won't happen on the current administration's watch. A similar despair about prospects for reform is a factor in the failure of veteran newspeople to write about reforms they know need to be made. They are convinced, for example, that whatever they write, incompetent civil servants are not going to be dismissed, so why write about the problem? That kind of fatalism has also governed health-care issues since the flop of Hillary Rodham Clinton's proposal. The wise guys in the press think overall reform of the health care system is so improbable that they don't write about the need for it even though the need is great.

If the press is to play the crucial role I see for it in improving government, it is essential that it understand cultural truths. There are two ways to obtain this understanding. One is to serve in government. Unfortunately, only a handful of reporters have done so. Even fewer have served in the executive-branch agencies. In part this failure is traceable to a loony assumption in the world of journalism that working on "the other side" leaves a reporter tainted forever. In fact, it can illuminate his reporting with genuine understanding of the other side. There are two recent examples of what experience in the field he or she is going to cover can do for a reporter. Both Bethany McLean, who broke the Enron story in *Fortune*, and Gretchen Morgenson, who revealed in *The New York Times* how brokerage analysts are bribed to favorably evaluate stocks, had worked on Wall Street before entering journalism. So they had a nose for where the bodies were buried. They knew what they were talking about.

Another way for reporters to acquire this understanding is through reporting in depth. Every time reporters take the time to go into a story thoroughly, they are increasing their intellectual capital, their understanding of how Washington really works. And, if they continue to do these kinds of stories on government, they will gradually learn what the insiders know and the public needs to find out. ■

Charles Peters, founding editor of The Washington Monthly, is president of Understanding Government, a foundation dedicated to better reporting about government at all levels.

THE OTHER WASHINGTON

BY CHRISTOPHER HANSON

The *Washington Post's* best unsung reporters might well be Sarah Lane and her predecessor Donna Mackie, whose "District Animal Watch" column has become a marvel of minimalist prose and tragicomedy. Consisting of five to eight short items a week, the column is ostensibly about the plight and rescue of animals. It is in fact a mini-chronicle of human vice, virtue, sorrow, and folly in a corner of Washington rarely spotlighted elsewhere in the press.

The Animal Watchers have an eye for the striking detail. The neglected and emaciated guinea pigs "ate and drank ravenously." The woman who mistook a toy snake for a live one "offered the [Animal Control] officers homemade chocolate cookies, which they accepted." The pit bull impounded when a woman is arrested dancing naked on top of a car is named "Brittany" and has pink polish on its front toenails.

Of such specifics are miniature tragedies, horror stories, and bittersweet comedies composed. Most often, judging by the reported addresses, these tell us something disquieting about life in the District's poorest neighborhoods.

Consider what might have been a routine account. Neighbors report a very thin pit bull in an apartment building basement. Humane Society officers tell the owner the dog will be impounded unless she improves its conditions. She agrees to surrender it. The officers follow her to the pound. Nothing special so far. But then Lane adds this: "Crying, she said she had bought the dog from a child but could not care for it properly. The dog was euthanized." An animal-neglect vignette has suddenly become a story of human loneliness and despair.

Or take a less depressing case. A woman summons Animal Control, saying something is wrong with her two cats. "When an Animal Control officer



responded, the woman said that she had had the cats for two weeks and that their eyes were turning black. The officer found that the cats were healthy and explained to the woman that cats' eyes dilate in low light."

The back-story here is one of ignorance and mystery. How can someone reach adulthood without realizing why we wear sunglasses outside and take them off indoors? And what of the prospects of the man who summoned Animal Control when a moth — which he mistook for a bat — flew into his dwelling? Or the woman who insisted adamantly that an intruding snake in her house was a rattler, even though it had no rattles? Officers found a common nonpoisonous brown snake, inexplicably covered with jelly.

Other items are chilling. A man walking an acquaintance's two dogs begins beating them. Several passersby stop and cheer him on. Alerted to the scene, officers catch him brandishing the stump of a broom handle, which he admits having broken over one of the pets. When the officers return the dogs to their owner after medical treatment, she expresses surprise because the man said he had been a dog trainer for twenty years.

There's a whole world of horror behind that yarn.

In other columns, children play catch with a baby cardinal, splatter cats on the asphalt, smash an opossum with bricks. They soak a dog in alcohol and set it ablaze. Teenagers stage fights between

pit bulls and shoot and stab the dogs of rivals.

This is a side of Washington the news audience sees little of because reporters focus so much on posturing officials and pundits and middle-class travails. That makes "District Animal Watch" essential reading. It is a weekly reminder that, just blocks from elite Washington, neglected and abused children vent their rage on powerless animals until they are old enough to turn it on their own offspring. And that nothing effective is being done to stop the cycle.

Lane is a mean-streets Aesop, often selecting incidents that have dramatic irony and perhaps an implicit moral:

- Man buys attack dog. Dog attacks him.
- Teen tries to force his pit bull to mate. Animal Control has it neutered.
- Man gets sentenced to prison. Authorities impound and euthanize his pet tarantula. When you break the law you hurt those closest to you.

Lane also gives us uplifting moments — as when a fireman, heeding the pleas of a teenaged pet owner, re-enters a burning, smoke-filled building to scoop up and resuscitate a choking ferret.

In my favorite rescue story, a woman summons Animal Control because a pack of crows is dive-bombing an injured owl. The officers arrive to find her brandishing a broom to fend off the crows. They tell her the owl is healthy and that crows commonly try to drive owls from their territory.

Even so, I like to imagine that woman sticking steadfastly to her post, every inch the idealist, tilting at crows to defend a symbol of wisdom. Futile, perhaps, but somehow reassuring in a city marred by cruelty.

Thanks to Sarah Lane and the *Post* for giving us this dark but revealing window on Washington. ■

Christopher Hanson, a newspaper reporter for twenty years, teaches journalism at the University of Maryland. He is a CJR contributing editor.

BOOKS

An Incorrect Brit In King Carter's Court

BY CHRISTOPHER ISENBERG

In his new tell-too-much memoir, *How to Lose Friends & Alienate People*, Toby Young explodes the myth that every would-be British journalist who washes up on Manhattan is promptly handed a corner office at Condé Nast. On the contrary, two years after accepting a trial contributing editor slot from *Vanity Fair's* Graydon Carter, Young is forced to go scampering back to Blighty broke, drunk, depressed, hated by some of the most powerful media players in New York, and without a whole lot of byline to show for it.

As the story of this failure, *How to Lose Friends* should be avoided by those in search of a magazine equivalent to William Goldman's *Adventures in the Screen Trade* or John Gregory Dunne's *Monster*. Young can't deliver a hardened, knowing take on the inner workings of the country's top-dog glossy because he wasn't privy to them. At *Vanity Fair*, Young was quarantined in a converted closet with an equally disenfranchised twenty-five-year-old researcher, Chris Lawrence, with whom he apparently spent his days striking out with Prada-

clad fashion assistants, flipping through the *James Bond Companion*, and bestowing such nicknames on each other as "Frat Boy" and "Toadmeister."

Neither will the memoir be of much help as a "what not to do" because the series of transgressions that ultimately get him fired come off much more as adolescent self-sabotage than genuine miscalculation. Would any aspiring magazine journalist really need to be told not to start off an interview with

HOW TO LOSE FRIENDS & ALIENATE PEOPLE

BY TOBY YOUNG
DA CAPO PRESS. 340 PP. \$24

Nathan Lane by asking if he's gay, offering Graydon Carter red-penned critiques of his own articles, or sending a colleague a stripper-gram on Take Our Daughters to Work Day?

Young's best trade material is on his editor-in-chief. When he arrives at *VF*, Graydon Carter gives him what Young later learns is the standard matriculation address: "You think you've arrived, don'tcha? I hate to break it to you but you're only in the first room . . ." Young dubs

Carter's infamous seven-rooms speech "the nightclub theory of career advancement" and muses, "I was the wannabe in Studio 54 who'd somehow managed to get past Steve Rubell at the door but was a long way from snorting coke off Margaret Trudeau's cleavage in the VIP room." Another nice tidbit is the Carter-authored list of words officially banned from *VF*: "boite (for restaurant); chortled (for said), chuckled (for said), cough up (as in to spend); doff, donned (as in put on); eatery (for restaurant), executive-produced, and such like, flat, flick, freebie, freeloader, fuck (okay for exclamation, not for having sex) . . ." But before Young can gather more revealing material on Carter, their relationship devolves into wayward son and annoyed father. Carter returns his pitches with rejection notes in progressively shorter shorthand ("That's great, Toby, but it's first room stuff"; "first room stuff"; and finally simply "first room"). After Young spends months wangling an invitation to the vaunted *Vanity Fair* Oscar party at Morton's, Carter chastises him for arriving ahead of his scheduled time (the invites are staggered so that no-names like Young barely get in before

Graydon Carter (smoking, center left) surveys the scene at *Vanity Fair's* Oscar party in Los Angeles, March 1998



PHOTOS BY DAVID JONES



Toby Young

last call) and harassing A-listers like Jim Carrey and Mel Gibson. Finally, when one of Young's increasingly common drinking binges leads to a pummeling from the bouncer at Pravda and an item on Page Six, the ax falls. "Listen, Toby, I'm gonna have to take your name off the masthead. This kind of thing isn't good for the magazine's image."

From there Young departs completely from the publishing world to chronicle his brief descent into New York misery and ultimate redemption. He drinks so heavily even Anthony Haden-Guest advises him to slow down, he pouts over the success of his fellow British expat Alex de Silva (who manages to set up a life selling screenplays and screwing a supermodel in L.A. in the same time it takes Young to get fired), he curls into a ball of self-pity and despair. But, in the end, he backs away from the windowsill, wins the love of a sassy British lass who — unlike her New York counterparts — laughs at his dirty jokes and can get past his bald head and empty bank account. And under her influence, he realizes the

error of his ways, gets on the wagon, and retreats to London.

If not inspiring, his personal history is harmless enough if a bit syrupy at the end. However, what rankles are Young's pseudo-intellectual posturings on the state of American magazines and wannabe Toquevillean musings on the differences between Brits and Yanks.

Young casts himself as an idealistic young reporter and satirist (In London, he had founded *The Modern Review*, a high-brow journal of low-brow culture which ran stories about things like the enduring appeal of the Porky's trilogy in the Romanian underground) who comes to New York chasing roundtable-at-the-Algonquin dreams, but finds to his horror that the magazine world is peopled by humorless teetotalers who do nothing but worship at the altar of celebrity. "I'd been looking forward," Young writes, "to meeting the hard-scramble reporters Ben Hecht pays tribute to in *A Child of the Century*. They sat, grown and abuzz, outside an adult civilization, intent on breaking windows." I was expecting their contemporary equivalents to adopt a them-and-us attitude towards celebrities and their handlers, ridiculing and lampooning them at every turn. In fact, they behaved like flunkies at the court of Louis XIV, snapping to attention whenever a boldface name so much as glanced in their direction."

As a recent escapee (not a euphemism for fired) from a brother Condé Nast publication, *Details* — a magazine Young describes as being for men "who like staring at pictures of naked men but haven't quite figured out why" — I can certainly empathize with some of Young's disappointments about glossy life. Like him (and undoubtedly all of our peers), I brought my own journalistic fantasies to the job — although mine ran more toward '60s *Esquire* than '20s *Vanity Fair*. Like him, I sometimes ran afoul of a corporate culture that didn't share my sense of humor, was inept at playing the office politics that help get you to "the second room," and was surprised at the extent to which publicists influenced magazine content. But the biggest disappointment about the experience was that *Details* lost its nerve only a year into an experiment to make over the magazine from its brief incarnation as a Mark Golim-led *Maxim* imitator into a semi-serious, basically unisex, general-interest magazine. In my first year there, I wrote about boxing,

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Picture by Lillian Ross

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DA CAPO PRESS

www.perseusbooksgroup.com

sumo wrestling, hip-hop tattoos, and Mario Cuomo. But in response to sluggish newsstand sales, it was decided that the magazine needed to rid itself of expensive and often nondemographic targeted reportage. My editors suddenly started trying to convince me to write first-person pieces about going to a nude beach with my girlfriend's family and taking a two-month program of penis-extending pills (with no assurances of what was actually in them).

While no one would confuse *Vanity Fair* with *Harper's*, it's not exactly *Entertainment Weekly* either. The issue on newsstands in August contains its standard cocktail of movie business, high society, politics, crime, and foreign affairs: stories on Daniel Pearl, the child-molesting priest Paul Shanley, the fall of Michael Ovitz, and the Skakel trial. With *Talk* essentially a non-starter, it remains the only monthly general-interest magazine with the budget and inclination to fund such a diverse range of stories. And while (like every other glossy) it may have to employ full-time celebrity wranglers and kiss some Hollywood publicist's ass to get the cheesecake covers that insure they hit their circulation targets, *Vanity Fair* often gets the compensatory

pleasure of Hollywood agents calling to option their features. With an in-house opportunity to get ideas approved and follow in the footsteps of his reporter-heroes, corporate charge card in hand, Toby Young hit *Vanity Fair* with the following pitches: 1. "How hard is it in this day and age to become a social pariah?" He offers to see how many enemies he can make in a twenty-four-hour period by drinking beer at an AA meeting, letting his cell phone ring incessantly during *Death of a Salesman*, and smoking a cigar at a vegetarian restaurant. 2. "Who is the elusive Jay McInerney and why is he so publicity-shy?" He suggests a tongue-in-cheek profile of the ubiquitous author, wherein he is ironically described a Salingeresque recluse. 3. There's this guy named Abdul in L.A. who for \$300 picks a fight with you during a date and then lets you kick his ass. Young offers to go out with a *Playboy* bunny and have Abdul work his magic.

But even if, as Young wants us to believe, some of those pitches were originally intended as jokes, he unironically tries to blame his ultimate failure at *Vanity Fair* on the inability of his colleagues to accept his politically incorrect views and swinging nightlife habits: "The old-

fashioned New York journalist, a harum-scarum roustabout whose status is somewhere between 'a whore and a bartender,' has been replaced by a clean and sober careerist with a summer house in the Hamptons." He never seems to notice that the only thing he has in common with his idealized newsies of yore is a love of booze: he doesn't have a nose for hot copy, he doesn't pound the pavement looking for scoops, and his pitches read like they were plucked from the reject pile at *The Onion*. Christopher Hitchens likes to drink and smoke, too, but he still has a job at *Vanity Fair* because he also likes to report. In the end, Young's analysis of his failure is less convincing than Carter's. "What the hell happened? I gave you the opportunity of a lifetime and you fucked the dog?"

Fortunately for Toby Young, he no longer needs Carter's favor. The movie rights to *How to Lose Friends* have already been optioned (Cameron Crowe to direct?), and his latest dispatch from London is the lead story in the August issue of *Details*. The cover line: Why It's Okay to Pay For Sex. ■

Christopher Isenberg is a free-lance writer based in New York.

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PBS: Problematic Broadcasting System

BY LAWRENCE K. GROSSMAN

PBS is looking especially vulnerable these days. In the fast-changing, multichannel media world it seems to be merely treading water. Most of its shows have been around for decades. Its audiences are shrinking. Memberships have hit a plateau. Underwriting is down. And it's being assailed on all sides, both inside and outside the public television system. Some complaints about public TV have been heard for years: Conservatives think it's too liberal. Liberals think it's too conservative. Populists think it's too elitist. Culture mavens complain it's not elitist enough. Even *The Wall Street Journal* thinks PBS is getting too commercial.

Unlike public radio, which has found an important and successful role for itself providing its fast-growing audience with what is now the nation's best source of broadcast news, public television's dilemma is that everyone has a different view of what its role should be. Some say that in the digital age, PTV should return to its original mission as ETV, and provide education and training on the air. Others want it to be more innovative, experimental, and cutting-edge, a source for quality, noncommercial, independently produced cultural and information programs. Minorities argue it should basically serve their special needs and provide opportunities for those denied access to mainstream media. Public television's loyal station members see it as the high-road alternative to an otherwise tawdry commercial TV world. Others say, who needs taxpayer-supported public television now that we have all those commercial and pay channels?

Most recently, Representative Billy Tauzin, chairman of the House committee that controls public broadcasting's federal dollars, took offense at PBS's beloved *Sesame Street*, attacking its plan to introduce an HIV-positive Muppet in its pro-

grams for AIDS-ravaged South Africa. Tauzin and several congressional colleagues dispatched a threatening letter to PBS expressing concern that innocent young American children might be exposed to the infected TV puppet and wanting to know how much federal money was being spent on this "inappropriate" new *Sesame Street* character. In a response hardly calculated to shore up confidence in public television's political independence, PBS assured Congress it would not "incorporate an HIV curriculum . . . into [*Sesame Street*]'s protected, safe, education rich environment" in this country, lamely explaining that AIDS is less of a problem here than in South Africa.

Two recently published books add new

VIEWERS LIKE YOU? HOW PUBLIC TV FAILED THE PEOPLE

BY LAURIE OUELLETTE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS. 288 PP.
\$49.50, \$18.50 PAPER

THE OTHER FACE OF PUBLIC TELEVISION: CENSORING THE AMERICAN DREAM

BY ROGER P. SMITH
ALGERA. 336 PP. \$22.95

complaints to public television's list of woes. *Viewers Like You?* by Laurie Ouellette, who teaches media studies at Rutgers University, offers an academic, thoroughly researched, although narrowly and at times maddeningly doctrinaire "cultural studies" analysis of PBS. The author attacks public television's elitist, reformist, upper middle-class, Eurocentric, eat-your-spinach-because-it's-good-for-you mentality. PBS public affairs programs like *Washington Week* and the *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, she says, reflect the "cultural habits of well-educated, white male opinion leaders." With their calm, rational, informed talk, she charges, public TV programs defend "a racist capitalist society" and preserve public order. As a result, "public television does more

to perpetuate cultural injustices than to ameliorate them." In a characteristically opaque passage, Ouellette argues that public television should put on "programs that people like to watch . . . mandated to represent racial, class, gender, and sexual diversity" that maintain "standards of social and ethical accountability that are negotiated by audiences themselves." Even *Sesame Street*, she writes, is a product of "humanitarian noblesse oblige" that tends "to encourage volunteerism but maintain the dominant power/knowledge hierarchies" in our society.

The Other Face of Public TV: Censoring the American Dream, by Roger P. Smith, a veteran public-affairs producer for both public and commercial television, argues that public television is nothing more than a "decorous government information service," politically supine, bureaucratic, propagandistic, and dull. For him, *Washington Week* and *NewsHour* are no more than tepid, talking-head "examples of Washington examining its navel." Smith advocates a billion-dollar trust fund for public television to insulate it from the control of politicians. However, the annual income from such a fund, about \$50 million, is a pitiful fraction of what is needed to run public television today and hardly enough to insulate it from political control.

Further, Smith's book is bedeviled by errors, meandering diversions, and sloppy editing that undermine his points. For example, he calls the respected magazine editor Clay Felker a "Nixon hatchet-man" who instituted "an inquisition of noncommercial broadcasting" in his role as the president's principal TV adviser. Smith probably meant to vent his ire at another Clay — Clay Whitehead. He attributes a quote to one of "the journalists of my acquaintance," "The New York Times Editor-in-Chief Hodding Carter," who, of course, never held that job. Perhaps Smith meant Turner Catledge, another Mississippian who was, indeed, a *Times* editor. He describes the current Corporation for Public Broadcasting chief, Robert Coonrod, as a "former CPB President." And in a mystifying and notably unhelpful departure from all precedent, the book's index lists the people men-

Public television's dilemma is that everyone has a different view of what its role should be

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tioned in its pages in alphabetical order by their first name. So Felker can be found under Clay, Carter under Hodding, Orwell under George, etc.

I agree with both authors that public television suffers from too much conventional, establishment thinking; timidity in the face of controversy and pressure, and an excessively elitist, "we're good for you" attitude. If PBS only had a sense of humor and encouraged more independent creativity and originality, its programs would serve audiences far better. But neither *Viewers Like You?* nor *The Other Face of Public TV* offers coherent, practical suggestions about how to make that happen.

I sympathize with public TV's leaders who are mired in a bureaucratic, underfinanced system and have to serve too many masters and satisfy too many expectations. If I were writing a book about how to fix public television, I'd urge — at the risk of alienating academic cultural theorists — that it continue to take the high road in this new multichannel digital age and concentrate on four critically needed areas:

1. Become the nation's premiere forum on democracy. Every week, do what none of the hundreds of existing broadcast and cable TV channels does. Examine in lively, fair-minded, provocative, clear, in-depth prime-time documentaries the great public issues of our time, such as education, race, campaign financing, welfare, immigration, aging, social security, health insurance, taxes, the environment, homeland security, defense, human rights, business and labor, terrorism, globalization, foreign policy. Provide room for all responsible viewpoints, even if they're outside the mainstream. And before every election make

lots of free time available to all major local and national candidates.

2. Continue to be the primary source of quality educational children's programs.

3. Take full advantage of the new digital telecommunications technologies to focus on lifelong education and training. Help transform education in its broadest sense in this nation. Adventurous public television stations in places like Kansas City, Nebraska, Connecticut, Washington, and elsewhere are launching promising new initiatives. They are opening up exciting new avenues for education and training in their communities; putting school curricula on line; serving as outlets for their universities, libraries, and public health centers, and starting impressive new civic engagement efforts.

4. Deliver a strong, entertaining strand of arts and cultural programs featuring star-filled original productions of the great American dramatic repertoire, plays by Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, William Inge, Arthur Miller, August Wilson, Tony Kushner, Wendy Wasserstein, Edward Albee, and others, mixed with the best of talented new playwrights. Add off-center stuff outside the dominant culture for spice and diversity.

If PBS starts showing more spine, innovation, and imagination, and finds ways to take better advantage of the diverse creative talent available throughout the nation, perhaps it would improve its chances of getting the public funds it needs to bring out the best in our society. ■

Lawrence K. Grossman is a former president of PBS and NBC News and a trustee of Connecticut Public Broadcasting.

BOOK REPORTS

BY JAMES BOYLAN

THE FIRST CASUALTY: THE WAR CORRESPONDENT AS HERO AND MYTH-MAKER FROM THE CRIMEA TO KOSOVO

By Phillip Knightley
The Johns Hopkins University Press
574 pp. \$19.95 paper

Johns Hopkins's latest reissue of a journalism classic offers American readers the 2000 English edition of Phillip Knightley's durable and unblinking chronicle of the role of correspondents in covering, analyzing, and sometimes promoting wars. As in the original 1975 edition, the starting point is the Crimean War, but Knightley has added post-Vietnam chapters dealing with Britain's Falkland Islands conflict, the American invasions of Grenada and Panama, the Persian Gulf war, and NATO's Kosovo bombing campaign. There is no chapter on the 2001-2002 fighting in Afghanistan, but its character is unerringly foreshadowed in the ever more stringent policies enforced by Britain and the United States to exclude, control, and coerce correspondents — with bureaucrats acting in the knowledge that the public, and many editorial writers, would rather support a war than learn the truth about it. The freedom of correspondents to report in Vietnam, writes Knightley, was an aberration; there are new, simple rules: "control access to the fighting; exclude neutral correspondents; censor your own; and muster support, both on the field and at home, in the name of patriotism, labeling any dissidents as traitors." He concludes that the heroic age of war correspondence has vanished. *

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS STYLEBOOK AND BRIEFING ON MEDIA LAW

Edited by Norm Goldstein
Perseus Publishing, 383 pp. \$17

The AP Stylebook claims cumulative sales of 1.7 million copies, reaffirming its conversion from in-house guide to a general reference book. This new edition contains many of the expected new entries — jihad, muja-

hdeen, mullah, Taliban (no al-Qaida); firewall, LAN, MP3, offline, virus, worm. Others are revised, some to eliminate hyphens that have become superfluous: crossfire, freelance, teenage. Overall, the new edition is thirty pages shorter than its predecessor, two years ago, a mystery until one realizes that two pages of bibliography and the entire section encompassing photo captions and filing practices — that is, the segments dealing with the AP's internal business — have been removed, and with them such fine old terms as disregards, glances, NewsAlerts, urgents, and writethrus. All that remains of the old times are two pages devoted to penciled proofreaders' marks. *

PRECISION JOURNALISM: A REPORTER'S INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL SCIENCE METHODS, FOURTH EDITION

By Philip Meyer
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers
262 pp. \$75; \$24.95 paper

One reason that Philip Meyer's guidebook has lasted through four editions over twenty-nine years is that he has worked both sides of the street. Now the occupant of the Knight Chair in Journalism at North Carolina-Chapel Hill, he had an earlier career as a reporter, and draws freely on examples from his own experience. In his professorial mode, Meyer leads readers into becoming as comfortable with numbers as with words — data analysis, basic statistical procedures, constructing and interpreting surveys, using databases, and much more. At the same time, he warns working journalists not to get too comfortable with numbers — the danger, he observes, so common among social scientists, of "becoming so fluent with numbers that you begin to lose your ability to put their meaning into words that newspaper readers can understand and appreciate." At the end, he reveals, in a chapter called "The Politics of Precision Journalism," that the cause closest to his heart is the defense of polls as a valid instrument of democratic consensus-building. He concludes: "If precision journalism, in the form of preelection and exit polls, helps the electorate communicate with it-

self and bring about consensus, then there is hope for the brave new world of direct democracy that mass communication technology is trying to bring us." *

PERSPECTIVES ON AMERICAN BOOK HISTORY: ARTIFACTS AND COMMENTARY

Edited by Scott E. Casper, Joanne D. Chaison, and Jeffrey D. Groves
University of Massachusetts Press, in association with the American Antiquarian Society and The Center of the Book, Library of Congress
461 pp. and CD-ROM. \$70; \$24.95 paper

Although this reader is offered under the rubric of book history, in fact it encompasses the many forms of American print culture, including newspapers and magazines. The commentaries and bibliographies are engaging and/or useful, but the attractiveness of the collection lies in the abundant artifacts — a few, such as Benjamin Franklin's "Apology for Printers" (1731) familiar, but many more little-known and worth finding. For example, in a section about the industrialization of American newspaper and magazine publishing in the late nineteenth century, there is an 1887 comment by Allan Forman, editor of the long-forgotten periodical called *The Journalist*, of the impact of "boiler-plate" material on the local press, an 1891 reader protest against newspaper syndicates, and Jack London's depiction of life on Grub Street, which he knew so well. The collection concludes with a valuable section on newspapers since 1945 by Glenn Wallach, which contains excerpts from A.J. Liebling's 1960 gem, "Do You Belong in Journalism?" in which he remarked: "A city with one newspaper . . . is like a man with one eye, and often the eye is glass." In his commentary, Wallach recalls the 1952 film classic *Deadline U.S.A.*, about the closing of a newspaper, but concludes that despite changes in character and function, "The deadline for the newspaper as a medium has not arrived yet." *

James Boylan is the founding editor of *CJR* and professor emeritus of journalism and history at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

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VOICES, funded in part by the Ford Foundation, offers independent viewpoints on a variety of subjects. CJR welcomes contributions. You may submit manuscripts to the locations listed on page 4.

THE HEALTH BEAT

The Wonder Drug That Wasn't



**BY HILARY MACHT FELGRAN
AND ANN HETTINGER**

Hilary Macht Felgran, a former health editor at *McCall's* and *American Health for Women*, is a free-lance writer in New York; Ann Hettinger, also a former health editor at *McCall's*, is an assistant professor at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University.

In January 1997, editors and writers for some of the country's largest magazines gathered in Washington to attend a ball celebrating President Clinton's second inauguration. They ate, drank, mingled, and spent the night, all courtesy of the pharmaceutical company Wyeth Ayerst. It was common for the leading manufacturer of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) drugs to court women's magazines. Let's hope the party's over.

Their top-selling drugs — Premarin, Prempro, and Premphras — which generated more than \$2 billion for Wyeth last year, or nearly 15 percent of the company's revenue, may finally be fading, now that the National Institutes of Health has advised 16,000 women in a nationwide trial to stop using HRT. The pills were shown to raise the risk of heart attack, stroke, blood clots, and breast cancer. Nearly 45 million prescriptions for Premarin alone were filled last year, and experts say that in hindsight, the medical community jumped the gun. For years, doctors — who were also intensively solicited by drug companies — urged women to take hormones to ward off heart disease, despite the fact that the drugs had never been approved for that purpose.

But there's another reason for the medications' enormous popularity: in the effort to enlarge the market for these drugs, pharmaceutical companies aggressively promoted off-label uses of estrogen drugs to journalists, not only through wining and dining but by routinely supplying them with information that overstated the benefits and ignored the risks. Worse, these efforts worked.

As former health editors — at *McCall's* and *American Health for Women* — we were provided a steady stream of sources who spoke about HRT's supposed heart benefit as if it was proven, and who dismissed research showing that the drugs might actually promote heart problems. These experts also played down the breast cancer risk, one of the leading reasons many women have refused to take hormones over the years. The sources' financial ties to the drug companies were not revealed. "Companies have to get approval before they can market a drug for a particular use, but that doesn't mean they can't pay a university professor or group of experts to promote it off-label," said Dr. Diana B. Petitti, director of research and evaluation at Kaiser Permanente Southern California. Food and Drug

Administration rules prevent speakers from touting unapproved drug uses during press conferences, but they are free to do so in other settings.

Written materials distributed over the years trumpeted the same themes. As part of a 1998 American Heart Association campaign sponsored by Wyeth, we received a twenty-two-page pamphlet titled, "Take Charge! A Woman's Guide to Fighting Heart Disease." Loss of estrogen was listed first among heart-disease risk factors. A giant blurb stated: "Estrogen replacement helps protect against coronary heart disease risk." Estrogen's then-proven risks, like endometrial cancer and blood clots, were never mentioned.

Drug companies also tried to sell journalists on HRT by playing up the fact that heart disease is the number one killer of American women. Few editors and writers for women's magazines — the vast majority of whom are women — could resist. The problem was that in these stories, journalists repeatedly hyped the medication's unproven uses and played down the dangers. A story in the October 1997 issue of *Ladies Home Journal*, for example, stated: "A woman's chance of dying from heart disease is more than five times greater than dying from breast cancer, and HRT lowers that risk." An article published the following September in *Better Homes and Gardens*, the sixth-largest-circulation magazine in the country, advised women to "talk to your doctor about taking estrogen or hormone replacement therapy," adding, "Research has shown that estrogen and HRT may reduce the risk of heart attack after menopause by as much as 50 percent."

Over the years, this idea that hormones protect against heart disease — mostly based on a single observational study that is now cast in doubt — became part of the vernacular, and many magazines never even bothered to quote a source or cite statistics. A story in the November 1, 1999 issue of *Ladies Home Journal* stated in passing, "estrogen replacement therapy, which also protects against cardiovascular disease . . ."

Even more disturbing, magazines continued to make statements like that after the 1998 Heart and Estrogen/Progestin Replacement Study (HERS) trial, a controlled clinical study that raised a big red flag in finding that women who use hormones have *higher* rates of heart disease during the first year of use. More risks were found in the Women's Health Initiative, the national trial that was halted by the NIH in July.

Women's magazines aren't the only

ones to blame. *Newsweek*, for example, ran many stories over the years that quoted the same handful of sources who have financial ties to the drug companies, Wyeth in particular, and never mentioned those ties. Several of the stories cited no sources at all and, in fact, read like press releases in touting estrogen's benefits: Estrogen replacement therapy, according to a May 25, 1992 article, under the empowering title "Every Woman for Herself," "almost always zaps hot flashes, soothes vaginal dryness, improves bladder problems, evens out mood swings, and clears up short-term memory loss. It also combats the more serious effects of estrogen deficiency: osteoporosis and an elevated risk of heart attacks. The hormone retards bone loss and cuts death from heart attacks in half."

Then, in an almost absurd turnaround, in *Newsweek's* July 22 coverage of the Women's Health Initiative, a story titled "The End of the Age of Estrogen," says: "Women had been told for decades that estrogen taken with progestin would not only ease hot flashes and insomnia but help preserve bone strength, mental acuity and most important, heart health." Nothing like the passive voice.

What we can say about the past is this: the millions of American women who swallowed a hormone pill every day in the hope that it would protect them against heart disease deserved to know, at a bare minimum, that the drug was never approved to prevent or treat heart problems. Had journalists been more skeptical of the information they received, and reported on HRT with greater accuracy, women would have understood the differences between the medications' proven and unproven benefits and been better informed of the significant and life-threatening risks.

Going forward, it is important to recognize that journalists are confronted with a challenge that's hardly limited to these particular drugs: pharmaceutical companies aggressively pursue the press, and too often their messages are misleading. What can we do? We can start by securing sources that have no financial ties to the drugs we report on, or being sure to cite them when they do; by accurately reporting statistics and not using the same old stale numbers; by distinguishing between observational studies and controlled trials and other types of studies; by saying when a drug use is off-label; by being aware of nonprofit organizations that sound independent but are funded largely or entirely by drug companies (there are many!); and, for sure, by turning down invitations to those "free" lunches. ■

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VOICES

PENTAGON AND PRESS

Striking a Balance: Government's Needs Versus Those of the Media



BY VICTORIA CLARKE

Victoria Clarke is assistant secretary of defense for public affairs. Earlier, she held posts with the Hill and Knowlton public relations firm, Bozelle Eskew Advertising, and the National Cable Television Association. In 1992 she was press secretary for President George Bush's re-election campaign. Previously, she was press secretary to Senator John McCain. She is a 1982 graduate of George Washington University.

The preamble to the Constitution says one of its purposes is to "provide for the common defense." Its First Amendment guarantees freedom of the press. Those goals are not contradictory, but there are times — especially times of war — when they tug in opposite directions.

This is an instructive point for evaluating whether journalists have enjoyed sufficient access to the war on terrorism. The question is not whether either the media or the military are completely satisfied. Instead, the issue is whether the healthy yet balanced tension that should exist between those institutions in a free society has been achieved.

Now — with September 11 a year old in our memories but still vivid in our national consciousness — is the time to consider those questions.

When it comes to the Department of Defense's service to the media, we can do better.

The U.S. is a different country from what it was a year ago, and Afghanistan today is a free nation on a path to stability. Seventy nations are now supporting our war on terrorism, which has debilitated al Qaeda and saved countless lives.

And we have facilitated broad-ranging media access to the war as well. Whether we have struck the right balance between the constitutional dictates to provide for the common defense and secure freedom of the press is a question better answered in history's more objective hindsight. But this much is clear:

Despite our divergent missions — the military's paramount duty to protect its troops, and the media's principal charge to report as much as possible — both are striving to understand each other's needs while navigating the new and highly challenging environment of the first war of the Information Age.

Operation Enduring Freedom provided the Department of Defense with real-time instruction in 21st century war fighting. The same could be said of our relationship with the news media: We're learning lessons all the time. Along the way, Defense has successfully facilitated broad access to military operations, made some mistakes and, throughout the process, learned important lessons that will be helpful in guiding the military-media relationship in the future.

Since September 11, the department has responded to more than 42,000 media inquiries, hosted more than 5,000 media visits to military facilities, given more than 1,500 interviews, and conducted more than 225 press briefings.

On the first night of air strikes, thirty-nine journalists from twenty-six news organizations were aboard U.S. Navy ships involved in the operation. Another 100 were on the flight line when C-17's returned from the first drops of humanitarian rations. Journalists have accompanied deployed troops more than 1,400 times.

We have provided unprecedented access to the top civilian and uniformed leaders of the military. Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has participated personally in more than 100 press briefings and avail-

AF WOODWARD/PHILIP SMITH/CLARKSON

abilities — dozens of them with General Richard Myers, of the Joint Chiefs of Staff — and given more than seventy press interviews. General Tommy Franks, commander of Enduring Freedom, has participated in live briefings and teleconferences with the media. Soon after September 11, we began conducting regular conversations with bureau chiefs to ensure that their concerns were heard.

Our record, to be sure, is also punctuated by occasional mistakes, both of judgment and in the accuracy of information we have provided. Troops on the scene initially denied journalists access to friendly-fire casualties in Kandahar, for example. We corrected the mistake and clarified procedures for use in the future.

One clear lesson of this first war of the Information Age is that speed and accuracy are not always compatible

goals. In our haste to provide information quickly, we have not always provided it accurately.

This balance between speed and accuracy has arisen on other occasions in Enduring Freedom, and it is likely to be a permanent dynamic in coverage of future wars. Our task is to strive for equilibrium — information that is as accurate as possible and as quick as possible — while being willing to correct mistakes quickly when we make them.

Flexibility will be as important in facilitating media coverage of wars as it is in fighting them. We must continue to look for opportunities to assure media access to combat forces and, when necessary, create smaller, regional media pools.

Other lessons doubtless remain ahead. Perhaps the most important is that the tension between the military

and the media provoked by the issue of media access to the war is healthy in a free society. Our challenge is to fine-tune that balance, not to resolve it altogether.

Defense's primary responsibility is to ensure the safety of our troops and the success of their missions — a goal journalists have almost universally respected. In the process of fulfilling that duty, we have, arguably, erred frequently on the side of caution. And journalists have — rightly — pushed for more access to the war than the department has thought it appropriate to give them.

Smart people will invest considerable thought in exploring whether the best balance has been struck between the two. But the goal of that process should be fine-tuning the military-media relationship, not erasing any trace of conflict between the two. ■

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LET'S DO IT BETTER!



If a Tree Doesn't Fall on the Internet, Does It Really Exist?



BY JOHN LENDER

John Lenger is assistant director for publications in the Harvard University office of news and public affairs. He has been teaching journalism at the university's Extension School for the past five years.

Last fall, a colleague and I taught a new journalism course at Harvard University Extension School. As the school's night college, the extension school attracts extraordinary students. Participants in the new course, ranging in age from early twenties to forties, included writers, editors, a lawyer, a producer, and several recent Ivy League graduates.

Our group project, designed to teach students to work together in reporting teams, centered on a historical puzzle. In March 1732, Harvard College was involved in an ownership dispute over a piece of land known as "Morroiconog Neck." The questions for the class were these: What happened in 1732? Where was Morroiconog Neck? How did Harvard get title to the land? When was the dispute settled? Who owned the land now? Most important, did the dispute offer any insights into why Harvard had grown from a poor and humble school into a rich and powerful university?

As it happens, a document offering some details about the dispute is part of my personal collection of Harvard memorabilia. I gave each student a copy of the document; at the end of a week of research, we would form teams to compile and sift through the information we had gathered. The students also got a warning: almost none of the information they needed would be found on the Internet.

I did not expect this to be a difficult exercise. The document itself, though hard to read in places, contained the names of several people, the places they

lived, and dates when certain events occurred. Harvard University has an extraordinary archive that dates back to its 1636 founding. Harvard also has the world's largest academic library. To get to class, the students had to walk past both the university's main library and the archives. With so much information available, how hard could such an assignment be?

The next week, the students made their reports. They had spent most of their time researching on the Internet. Some had spent hours. They had accumulated some general information — much of it from online genealogies — but its reliability was questionable. More frustrating to me was the discovery that only three students had used their Internet searches to find real people to talk with. During the class discussion, several students said they were not sure how to use archives, while others said that using actual libraries was burdensome.

The youngest students had difficulty imagining a pre-Internet world; one, who had located a Web site for the university real-estate office, didn't believe me when I said this office was unlikely to have records from the 1730s. "They'll just look it up in the computer," she said. Such attitudes were reinforced when students worked together. Researching what Harvard was like in the 1730s, for example, members of a small group had typed variations of "Harvard in the 1730s" into a search engine, found nothing, and concluded that no records existed.

A handful of students did uncover some significant informa-

tion, through visiting the Harvard Archives, locating an expert in ancient English documents, and hooking up with a historian from Harpswell, Maine, the present-day name for Morroiconog Neck.

Yet basic questions weren't addressed because students had difficulty using the libraries and archives that would give them the answers. At semester's end, we still didn't have the story.

Those of us who learned our journalism before the mid-1990s, when Internet use started to grow astronomically, understand that not all of the world's accumulated knowledge exists on Web servers, and probably never will. Copyright, privacy, and the expense involved in digitizing old documents effectively keep billions of information sources offline. In the United States alone, more than three centuries' worth of records exist in non-digital form, and not every record generated today is computerized. Yet most students who enrolled in the new course saw the Internet as not only authoritative and reliable, but also comprehensive. They were genuinely surprised that the wisdom of the ages has not been digitized and made accessible through a Web browser. For them, the Internet looks like a free lunch.

But search-engine journalism won't allow us to dig deeply. While teaching the wonders of the Internet, we also must emphasize the importance of archives and libraries and human beings. Tomorrow's journalists must learn that the Internet hasn't made other research skills obsolete. It has made them more valuable — and necessary. ■

Careening Toward Extinction With Salvation Firmly in Hand



BY GENEVA OVERHOLSER

Geneva Overholser (overholserg@missouri.edu) writes regularly for CJR about newspapers. She holds an endowed chair at the University of Missouri school of journalism. Among positions she has held are editorial writer for *The New York Times*, editor of *The Des Moines Register*, and ombudsman for *The Washington Post*. She also served nine years on the Pulitzer Prize board.

The newspaper business often seems willfully headed toward extinction. It's not simply a question of not knowing any better — though it's true we know woefully little about ourselves, eschewing the research-and-development function other industries avidly pursue. The thing is, we even ignore what we do know.

Take, for example, that time-honored journalism staple: big events in regular people's lives. The much-discussed readership research by Northwestern University's Media Management Center ranked "opportunities by their potential to get people to actually read the newspaper more," and placed "community announcements, obituaries, ordinary people" right at the top. That's no shock. *The New York Times* won the nation's heart — and the Pulitzer gold medal for public service — in large part with exactly that menu of items. What were its "Portraits of Grief" if not a new rendering of "news about ordinary people" and obits rolled into one? Online advisers counsel editors to create community by including wedding announcements, obits, birth announcements and the like. All these elements regularly rank high in readership surveys. And so, no doubt, does the *Sunday Times's* "Vows" feature — a deliciously sentimental love-story wedding announcement writ large. So what have newspapers been doing with these gold mines of reader attraction? Reducing them to yet another revenue-producer, dry little ads that wring yet another few bucks out of the community. About 87 percent of large and mid-size dailies now charge for obits, ac-

cording to an estimate by the International Association of Obituarists.

Or, take training. In the average business — even for those with (supposedly) much less commitment to social responsibility — training is a given, says a report prepared earlier this year by the Council of Presidents of National Journalism Organizations and the Knight Foundation. The *Fortune* magazine list of "The 100 Best Companies to Work For" cites company offerings of from fifty-two hours to 132 hours of training per year per employee. The American Society for Training and Development says that the 367 non-journalism companies it tracks predicted a 37 percent increase in training spending between 2000 and 2001 — and reported preliminary estimates showing that even in the face of economic recession, spending on training increased 10 percent. Even more interesting, you'd think, to our profit-hungry industry, is this fact: "Year after year we find a strong relationship between an organization's investments in training and its performance," said the ASTD.

So how do newspapers do on this subject? Two-thirds of the nation's journalists receive no regular skills training at all, the COP/Knight survey indicated. Newspaper budgets for training are notoriously small — and quick to vanish entirely whenever quarterly reports disappoint. No wonder, then, that at last April's American Society of Newspaper Editors convention, an interesting fact emerged. American journalists rank "a lack of training" as their top source of job dissatisfaction — above pay and benefits. In the newspaper world, one editor not-

ed, training "is still too often thought of as an isolated frill."

Or, how about credibility? Study after study calls it a principal key to reader satisfaction. Frustration over errors large and small is legendary. We declare ourselves desperate to win and keep readers, and articles like "Raise credibility and you'll boost reader connection," from ASNE's *American Editor*, confirm that taking care of errors and inaccuracies offers substantial hope.

So how have we been proceeding? By reducing our capacity to address the errors. Pagination has required copy editors to add to their schedules the work previously done in composing rooms, reducing the time available for their own critically important work as newspapers' last (and best) stand against error. A University of Oregon study concluded that a medium-size paper paginating fifty pages a day would need to add more than one shift daily to handle the work. Yet a survey by University of Iowa researchers found that only eleven of forty-six papers had increased their staff at all. Thus did savings improve the bottom line — at the cost of further undermining newspapers' credibility. A University of Minnesota survey asked news organizations if they have a method for routinely checking the accuracy of news stories after publication — by using ombudsmen, for example, or content audits, or callbacks to sources. Sixty-seven percent said no. And about half said copy editors "have less time to spend checking the quality and accuracy of information in news stories" than they did just two years ago.

All this forms a rather discouraging body of evidence that we simply don't want to know how to help ourselves. ■

My Reluctant Exposé

BY TORI PEGLAR

When an alumni magazine editor asked me to write an article on Sandra Baldwin, the first female president of the United States Olympic Committee, I jumped at the opportunity. Defying seemingly insurmountable odds, Baldwin had broken through the glass ceiling of the Olympic Committee in 2000, shattering a 106-year streak of male presidents.

Her credentials were impressive: a bachelor's degree from the University of Colorado, a doctorate from Arizona State University, professor for eleven years and a successful real estate executive. She had even worked as a river guide, a sign of her drive for adventure and tolerance for uncertainty.

But when I turned in my story on Baldwin's accomplishments, the magazine's fact-checkers could not find her in the University of Colorado's listing of graduates and degrees. I called CU's academic records department for clarification, but Baldwin turned up only under her maiden name, Mary Alexandra Hawes, 1957-59.

There had to be a mistake. I called Arizona State University to verify that Baldwin had received her doctorate there in 1967. By the time the conversation ended, my neat little package of a story had unraveled. There was no Ph.D. under Baldwin's name — only a B.A. in 1962 and an M.A. in 1969. Across the phone line that stretched from the Arizona desert to the foothills of Colorado, I felt the rush of catching someone in a lie.

Almost every major newspaper in the country had written about Baldwin and her academic credentials, yet not one of them, apparently, had ever bothered to check them. Some newspapers had even mentioned the title of her dissertation — "Neoclassic Backgrounds of Nathaniel Hawthorne's Aesthetics" — and more than one had noted that she was a

tenured professor. It suddenly dawned on me that there could be as few as two people in the whole world who knew that Baldwin's academic credentials were false. I was one of them.

The adrenaline rushed through my body as I imagined the headlines on my story. But my stomach dropped when I thought of Baldwin. The news could brand her in the same way adultery had branded Hester Prynne in Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*.

As a reporter, I've covered my share of Greek tragedies. I've stood on a rural highway, piecing together a story of a desperate woman who fatally jumped from her moving car while her husband and children watched from their seats. I've written about a teacher who wrote fanatical love letters to his sixth-grade student. I've interviewed a woman who fought breast cancer and the public's ignorance of the disease until the cancer consumed her. Stories like these gleam with the fragility of the human condition in its ugliest and most tragic form.

But the Baldwin story was harder for me to write, perhaps because of her high-profile position. I squirmed as I acknowledged one journalistic truth: A story can melt a person's reputation into a puddle of sound bites and news clips. I found myself in a quandary: to disclose the inaccuracies or not.



It's hard to believe today that there are still women who are the "first" female president or c.e.o. of companies and organizations. But Baldwin was a "first" at the U.S. Olympic Committee, and I almost believed that made her untouchable. I was born one year after Title IX became law, which automatically made me a child of the women's movement. As a teenager, I watched my country learn how to talk about rape and sexual harassment. Glass ceiling became a household word. Would I be doing a disservice to the women's movement by exposing one of its pioneers?

In the end, I chose to expose the truth for two reasons: my desire to jump on a story that would certainly make national headlines and my conclusion that a lie is a lie no matter what gender you are.

After Baldwin admitted to falsifying her degrees to me in a phone interview from Malaysia where she was attending an Olympic conference, I called up Mike Moran, the chief communications officers for the U.S. Olympic Committee, to get his comments. Then, since it was clear that the university alumni magazine was not the place for this story, I e-mailed the piece to *The Greeley Tribune*, a newspaper in Colorado where I had worked as an education reporter until last summer.

But the *Tribune*, swamped with breaking local news stories, decided to hold my story for comment from another member of the Olympic committee. Meanwhile, a wire service reported that Baldwin had abruptly left Malaysia without explanation. In fact, Baldwin, alerted by Moran, had left for the States to face the publicity that would inevitably follow the story they knew was coming. But it didn't take long for Olympic reporters at the *Chicago Tribune*, *Denver Post*, and Associated Press, among others, to put two and two together with help from inside sources.

The story swept across the country like a hurricane. The next day, she resigned.

But I lost more than a byline that day. Watching from the calm of the storm, part of me wished I had never unearthed the inaccuracies. Baldwin shattered my naïve illusion that people in positions of power got there because they did all of the things they said they did.

Sometimes, it's more rewarding to cover prom fundraisers. ■

Tori Peglar teaches at the University of Colorado at Boulder and works as outreach coordinator at the CU Heritage Center.

The Lower case

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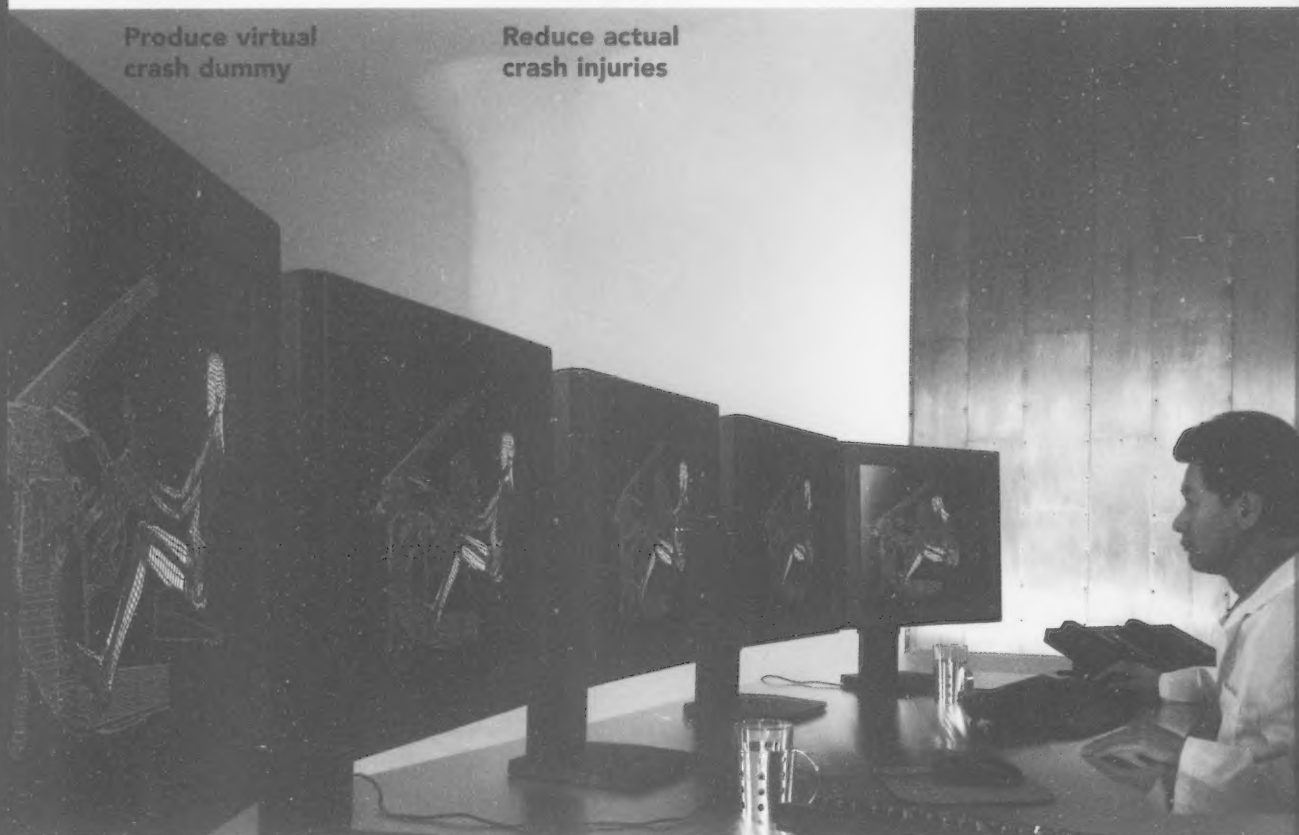
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